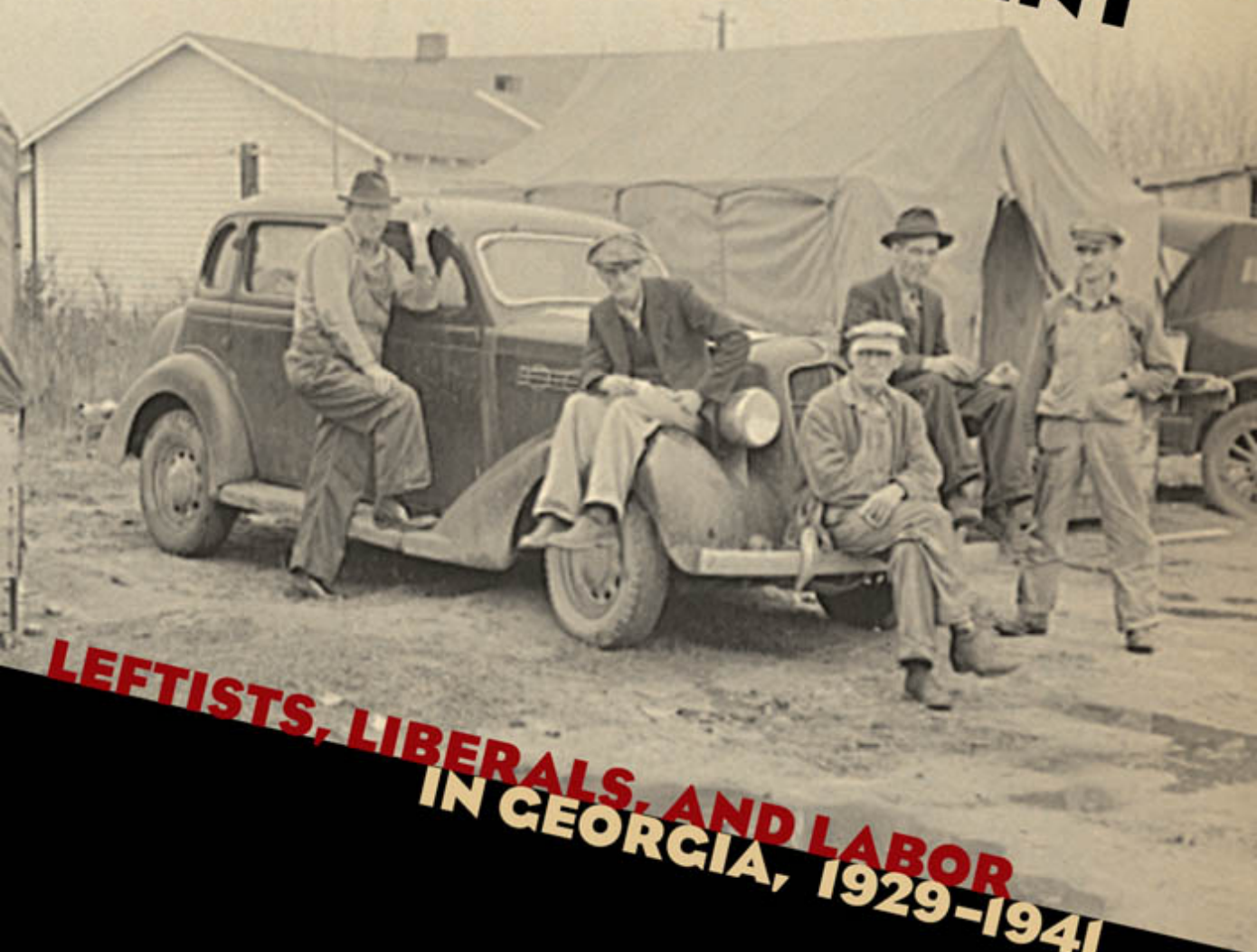
THE UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT



LEFTISTS, LIBERALS, AND LABOR IN GEORGIA, 1929–1941

JAMES J. LORENCE

VISIT…

The Unemployed People's Movement

POLITICS AND CULTURE IN THE
TWENTIETH–CENTURY SOUTH

Series Editors
Bryant Simon, Temple University
Jane Dailey, University of Chicago

Advisory Board
Lisa Dorr, University of Alabama
Grace Elizabeth Hale, University of Virginia
Randal Jelks, Calvin College
Kevin Kruse, Princeton University
Robert Norrell, University of Tennessee
Bruce Schulman, Boston University
Marjorie Spruill, University of South Carolina
J. Mills Thornton, University of Michigan
Allen Tullos, Emory University
Brian Ward, University of Manchester

The Unemployed People's Movement

Leftists, Liberals, and Labor in Georgia, 1929–1941

JAMES J. LORENCE

The University of Georgia Press Athens and London

© 2009 by the University of Georgia Press
Athens, Georgia 30602
www.ugapress.org
All rights reserved
Set in 10/13 Sabon by BookComp, Inc.
Printed and bound by Thomson-Shore

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for
permanence and durability of the Committee on
Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the
Council on Library Resources.

Printed in the United States of America
13 12 11 10 09 C 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Lorence, James J.
The unemployed people's movement : leftists, liberals, and
labor in Georgia, 1929–1941 / James J. Lorence.
p. cm. — (Politics and culture in the twentieth-century South)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-0-8203-3045-7 (hbk. : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-8203-3045-0 (hbk. : alk. paper)
1. Labor—Georgia—History.
2. Labor movement—Georgia—History. I. Title.
HD8083.G4 L67 2009
331.8809758'09043—dc22 2008016947

British Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data available
ISBN for this digital edition: 978-0-8203-3642-8

Contents

Acknowledgments vii

List of Abbreviations xiii

Introduction: Depression and Response 1

1. Economic Crisis as Opportunity: The Great Depression as Seedbed for Radical Activism in Georgia, 1928–1930 16

2. The Employment Crisis as Catalyst: Communist Activism and the Insurrection Law, 1930–1933 29

3. Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle of Georgia's Rural Jobless 60

4. The Great Upheaval: A New Labor Activism, Jobless Workers, and Families in Crisis, 1933–1934 79

5. Militant Labor: The Great Textile Strike of 1934 and the Problem of Unemployment 100

6. Serving Jobless Georgians: The New Deal and the Rise of the Unemployed Movement 127

7. The Workers Alliance and a United Front: Jobless Workers Organize, 1937–1938 165

8. Winding Down: A Revived Economy and the Decline of the Unemployed Movement, 1939–1940 189

9. The Crucible of War: Unfinished Business 213

Epilogue: The Implications of Mass Organization 224

Notes 233

Bibliography 275

Index 291

Acknowledgments

When I first arrived in Georgia to assume a position as Eminent Scholar of History at Gainesville State College, my initial perception of the state's history led me to believe that the prospects for an exploration of a traditional labor studies topic would be decidedly limited. A brief discussion with one long-established scholar of southern history seemed to confirm the paucity of sources for a study of Depression-era unemployed organizing in the state. Nonetheless, a deep personal interest in the response of the dispossessed to the economic crisis of the "hungry thirties" compelled me to launch an investigation of any attempts at collective action that might be identified in the story of one of the nation's hardest-hit states. While labor unions may have struggled to be born, I reasoned, unorganized workers must certainly have searched for their own solutions to human suffering and family distress. It was my task to uncover the remaining traces of their struggle.

Undeterred by the apparent scarcity of evidence, I undertook a search for the record left by the voiceless masses and those who emerged to speak for them. Fortunately, modern historians have begun to examine the experiences of Georgia workers in a number of innovative contributions to the state's labor history, most recently in the work of Karen Ferguson, Georgina Hickey, Randall Patton, Clifford Kuhn, and Michelle Brattain, among others. Likewise, older studies have illuminated other important aspects of that Depression experience, especially the valuable analyses of the New Deal by Michael Holmes and of the radical initiative

by Charles H. Martin. While many touch on the trauma of unemployment, few explore in any depth the effort to organize the jobless, especially the pressure from below.

The search for primary source material led to documents infrequently consulted in the effort to capture the history of desperate men and women. While the oral history accounts of the Georgia worker experience have been brilliantly exploited by several recent students of the 1930s, other sources have become available to enrich our understanding of worker experiences. The client correspondence in the archives of the National Recovery Administration (NRA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), for example, contain an exhaustive record of both individual and collective efforts to expand the boundaries of governmental concern for the victims of the Depression. Similarly, various oral history accounts document the fierce struggle between workers and both management and public authorities to create a more humane public welfare system, a battle that took place against the background of racial division, historical tradition, and long-established social assumptions. Finally, the records of radicals and radical organizations shed substantial light on the unemployed movement; of these, none are more significant than the papers of the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA), which have become available in recent years to historians interested in the role of the Left in community activism in the 1930s. As a useful supplement to the party's internal correspondence, the FBI files on the Georgia Workers Alliance help to complete the picture of organizing activity on the Left in an unreceptive state.

In view of the expanding source base, it now seemed possible to reconstruct the history of the unemployed movement in 1930s Georgia. The result is the current study, which explores the halting efforts of the jobless to find a voice and improve the status of the state's hard-pressed workers, farmers, relief recipients, and "unemployables." This analysis reveals substantial grassroots pressure for improved relief and public welfare spending from elements in the Georgia population sometimes thought to be inarticulate or silent. It further indicates that Communist, Socialist, and mainstream labor organizations all worked to channel that energy into collective protests at one time or another, thus disturbing the status quo in ways that horrified middle-class elites and provoked sometimes brutal official reactions to the perceived threat from Georgia's impoverished masses.

The narrative that follows confirms the willingness of Georgia workers to combine in pursuit of humanitarian goals and enlightened self-interest. Contrary to a widely held assumption, denizens of the state's underclass

were often willing to organize in self-defense and self-assertion. In short, Georgia citizens were fully able to accept the principle of collective action. The unemployed movement demonstrated that mass action was, in fact, an acceptable option for hard-pressed men and women who were perfectly willing to embrace unionism when the opportunity presented itself.

This book would not have been possible without the support of several institutions. Foremost in importance was the funding provided by Gainesville State College, which made research in Georgia history the primary focus of my teaching position. Strong support of my work was provided by both President Martha Nesbitt and Social Science Division Chair Charles Karcher, who gave me wide latitude in following my personal research interests. Throughout my tenure as Eminent Scholar of History, travel to distant manuscript collections was underwritten by the college's Eminent Scholar Research Fund. Moreover, crucial technical support at the college, especially the work of instructional technology specialist Alfred Barker, is gratefully acknowledged. Equally significant were administrators and staff at the University of Wisconsin–Marathon County, where the manuscript was completed. I especially thank Todd Roll, Scott Bouffler, and James Veninga for the technical and professional support they contributed to this project. Finally, a Lubin-Winant Research Fellowship from the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute facilitated research at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York.

The research task was eased by the work of archivists and library personnel at multiple archival repositories. Among them were Kathy Shoemaker of Emory University Special Collections, Pamela Hackbart-Dean and Lauren Kata of the Georgia State University Pullen Library's Southern Labor Archives, Harry Miller of the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives and Manuscripts Division, Susan Williams of the Highlander Research and Education Center Library, Peter Filardo at the Tamiment Institute and Robert Wagner Labor Archives at New York University, Karen Anson of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, John White of the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill's Wilson Library Southern Historical Collection, William LeFevre of the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs at the Walter P. Reuther Library, Jacque Roethler of the University of Iowa Special Collections, Mark Rosenzweig at the Reference Center for Marxist Studies, Rebecca Roberts of the Berry College Archives, Sandra Peck of the Tuskeegee University Archives, Cathy Lynn Mundale of Atlanta University Center Special Collections, Ronald

Bulatoff of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, and Christine Weidemann of Yale University's Special Collections at Sterling Memorial Library.

At the Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, John Earl Haynes was especially helpful in accessing the CPUSA records from the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI). His deep knowledge of this collection opened my eyes to the value of the RGASPI materials in understanding the work of the Communist Party in the United States. Special thanks are also due Ronald Bachman of the Library of Congress European Division, who aided me in uncovering materials from the Communist International records available in Moscow. Onsite assistance was also provided by Russian researcher Dasha Lotareva. At the National Archives, Eugene Morris offered valuable guidance in the use of the records of WPA and NRA.

An important source of both encouragement and wider knowledge of the available evidence was found among colleagues who shared their work and expertise with me, provided needed advice, and offered insightful criticism of my work at earlier stages of its development. Among those most helpful were Carl Weinberg of Butler University, James Smethurst of Amherst College, Rachel Rubin of the University of Massachusetts–Boston, Harvey Klehr of Emory University, Robin D. G. Kelley of the University of Southern California, Mark Solomon of Simmons College, Paul Buhle of Brown University, Ernst Benjamin of Silver Spring, Maryland, and Christopher Green of Marshall University. I especially thank my colleagues at Gainesville State College, including William Warren Rogers Jr., whose support and advice were essential to my systematic effort to acquaint myself with the outlines of modern Georgia history.

My research includes and expands parts of my writing that were published previously. I am grateful to the publishers for the use of portions of these works: "Mobilizing the Reserve Army: The Communist Party and the Unemployed in Atlanta, 1929–1934" in *Radicalism in the South since Reconstruction*, ed. Chris Green, Rachel Rubin, and James Smethurst (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) has been reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan; *A Hard Journey: The Life of Don West*, © 2007 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, has been used with permission of the University of Illinois Press; "The Workers of Chicopee: Progressive Paternalism and the Culture of Accommodation in a Modern Mill Village" in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* was published by the Georgia Historical Society.

At all stages in this project, I have also benefited from the competent work of dedicated professionals who assisted me in the process of manu-

script preparation. I am indebted to Julia Davies of the Gainesville State College Social Sciences Division and Alicia Buehler of the Upper Iowa University office in Wausau, whose work was essential to the completion of this book. Likewise, the experienced editors at the University of Georgia Press, especially Derek Krissoff and Jane M. Curran, provided the professional advice so necessary to the effective presentation of the author's work. And finally, I am grateful for the steady encouragement given me by my sharpest critic and strongest supporter, my life partner, Donna May Lorence, without whom I would never have reached this point in my academic life.

This page intentionally left blank

Abbreviations

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ACW	Amalgamated Clothing Workers
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFT	Atlanta Federation of Trades
ALUA	Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs
ANLC	Atlanta Negro Labor Committee
ASU	American Security Union
CC	Central Committee
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CIC	Commission on Interracial Cooperation
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLU	Central Labor Union
CP	Communist Party
CPUSA	Communist Party, U.S.A.
CWA	Civil Works Administration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FERA	Federal Emergency Relief Administration
FOIA	Files Obtained under Freedom of Information Act Request
FOR	Fellowship of Reconciliation
FU	Farmers Union
GERA	Georgia Emergency Relief Administration
GFL	Georgia Federation of Labor
GRC	Georgia Relief Commission

HUAC	House Committee on Un-American Activities
ILD	International Labor Defense
ILGWU	International Ladies Garment Workers Union
IWO	International Workers Order
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAM	National Association of Manufacturers
NLRB	National Labor Relations Board
NIRA	National Industrial Recovery Act
NNC	National Negro Congress
NRA	National Recovery Administration
NSL	National Students League
NTWU	National Textile Workers Union
NU	Neighborhood Union
NUL	National Urban League
NYA	National Youth Administration
POUR	President's Organization for Unemployment Relief
PWA	Public Works Administration
RGASPI	Russian State Archive of Social and Political History
SCHW	Southern Conference for Human Welfare
SCU	Share Croppers Union
SNYC	Southern Negro Youth Congress
SP	Socialist Party
STFU	Southern Tenant Farmers Union
TUEL	Trade Union Educational League
TUUL	Trade Union Unity League
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority
TWOC	Textile Workers Organizing Committee
TWUA	Textile Workers Union of America
UAW	United Auto Workers
UE	United Electrical Workers
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
USO	United Service Organizations
UTW	United Textile Workers
WAA	Workers Alliance of America
WPA	Works Progress Administration
YCL	Young Communist League
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

The Unemployed People's Movement

This page intentionally left blank

Depression and Response

Among the most persistent myths concerning the southern working class of the early twentieth century is the timeworn argument that the region's workers were somehow impervious to the drive toward organization that affected urban, industrial America. To be sure, in many areas, including the bellwether state of Georgia, there was resistance to collective action that contributed to the development of a labor movement that grew strong primarily within the ranks of skilled operatives who organized on the basis of shared trades. Nonetheless, in recent years scholars have begun to unravel the story of Georgia's laborers, both union and nonunion, whose experience contradicts the prevailing wisdom with regard to the appeal of organization. Modern historians, including Karen Ferguson, Georgina Hickey, Randall Patton, Douglas Flamming, Michelle Brattain, Clifford Kuhn, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Charles Martin, have gradually chipped away at the mistaken assumption that the state's workers were unable to accept the idea of united action in class interest.[1]

Perhaps the foremost proponent of the South's new labor history has been historian Robin D. G. Kelley, whose landmark study of Alabama Communists and community organizing in the 1930s took a huge step toward an alternate interpretation of the southern working class. By focusing on the role of radical organizers in the mobilization of Alabama's urban and rural workers, Kelley was able to demonstrate that in the heart of the Black Belt as well as the Birmingham district, African American

Communists fashioned a vibrant social and political movement among the unorganized poor that raised a strong challenge to the proponents of the status quo in the depths of the Great Depression. With no radical tradition to guide them, black workers and their white allies built a political movement that against all odds brought needed racial and economic changes to one of the South's most socially regressive states. Alabama radicals and their supporters were able to achieve those goals by building an impressive coalition of miners, industrial workers, militant youths, and unemployed families capable of reversing, at least temporarily, some of the region's most strongly held economic policies and racial traditions.[2]

Unlike Georgia, Alabama's industrial heartland included a massive concentration of African American laborers in an urban setting. Even in Atlanta, the black population was sufficiently dispersed so that effective organizing lagged behind the levels of intensity reached in neighboring Birmingham. It is equally true that state oppression was demonstrably more sweeping in Georgia than was true in Alabama, though neither state could be viewed as tolerant of radical dissent. Particularly in rural areas, with the exception of the southwestern border areas, state authority combined with planter dominance over a dependent sharecropper-tenant class to stifle organizational activity. Rural dependency and the absence of what organizers saw as a critical mass of suffering workers and their families in urban Georgia inhibited Communist efforts to mobilize the poor for mass action, while their counterparts in Alabama responded readily to the party's appeals.

One of the key elements in the Alabama movement involved a number of aggressive unemployed groups that collectively became a powerful catalytic influence in the political and economic life of the Birmingham industrial area. Mirroring national trends, jobless workers coalesced into an organized force that commanded the attention of employers, public officials, and welfare authorities, all of them unaccustomed to resistance from the casualties of capitalism's crisis. Pouring into first the Unemployed Councils and later the Workers Alliance of America, the unemployed came to understand the importance of collective action as a tool for expressing their demands on the system. Kelley's work dramatically documents the significance of these organizations in meeting the needs of Alabama's dispossessed citizens.[3]

Operating from a position of subordination, the members of loosely organized unemployed groups in both Alabama and Georgia found the Unemployed Councils and the Workers Alliance to be useful vehicles for the expression of protest against the hardships they experienced. In

so doing, they created what James C. Scott has labeled a "hidden transcript" of thinly veiled resistance to a "public transcript" imposed on an exploited subordinate group by the elites that dominated southern society and government. Moreover, their acts of defiance occupied the "immense political terrain" that lay "between quiescence and revolt," thus enabling the "subject classes" to engage in a form of protest politics denied them by the existing political discourse of the Depression-era South. By challenging their superiors through politically and socially acceptable channels, the jobless chose a form of "disguised resistance" that Scott sees as the "silent partner of a loud form of public resistance."[4] Particularly after the advent of the New Deal, the Georgia unemployed learned to use new federally imposed institutions as a forum for addressing the needs of the jobless within a new framework of externally imposed authority. What may seem like modest demands and random acts of low-level resistance, as in the case of the Georgia unemployed movement, may actually be understood as the innovative means by which the oppressed and dispossessed shaped history with their claims against a government and economic system that seemingly ignored their plight.

Some scholars have vigorously argued that Depression-era unemployed organizations exemplified a classic social movement, which meant a transformation of consciousness and behavior on the part of their members. In most respects, the experiences of the Alabama and Georgia bodies fit the model. Once the jobless had denied legitimacy to an economic system that had collapsed before them and demanded that the right to survive be respected by those in authority, they embraced defiant collective action to achieve their objectives. The end result was a spontaneous social protest rising from the grass roots and expressing itself through a diverse array of new organizational outlets.[5]

In both Georgia and Alabama, as on the national scene, unemployed workers searched for an organizational instrument for the expression of their grievances and needs. However, as African American Communist Hosea Hudson would later observe, the lack of a stronger industrial base would deprive Georgia workers of the concentrated population base that enabled Birmingham workers to build their powerful movement. Despite this disadvantage, the Georgia unemployed crafted their own organizations that eventually became influential in representing them before public authorities responsible for aiding the victims of a broken economy. As the New Deal expanded the opportunities for assistance available to the jobless, the impulse to organize quickened, resulting in the intensification of grass roots pressure on their behalf. Georgia workers increasingly demanded improved relief programs, increased expenditures on public

welfare, and succor for the "unemployables" not likely to find a place in a wounded economy. This volume documents unprecedented activism within a segment of the Georgia population once thought to have been inarticulate or silent. Like the work of the middle-class community groups discussed by Ferguson and Hickey, the history of unemployed organizations and some labor unions confirms a willingness to coalesce and make demands that translated into popular insistence on economic change. This analysis, however, extends that argument by documenting heretofore unexplored pressure from below, emphasizing Communist initiative as well as the activism of other worker organizations and even some liberal groups. In the process, it confirms the catalytic role of radicals in shaping a collective protest that alarmed elites unaccustomed to such expressions of agency on the part of the mudsills of Georgia society.

Confronted by a rapidly deteriorating economy and widespread personal and family distress, a variety of political and community organizations devised varying solutions to what seemed an intractable social crisis. Among those who struggled to aid Georgia's Depression victims were the Communist Party, Socialist Party, American Federation of Labor, the welfare/relief bureaucracy that grew with the advent of the New Deal, and a bevy of middle-class liberal organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Urban League, Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), and the Neighborhood Union (NU).

Although Communists and Socialists shared a radical analysis of the crisis, the two were miles apart in their programs and policies. A militant organization that called for African American self-determination in the Black Belt, where they constituted the majority of the population, the Communist Party also embraced an interracial united front among its working-class followers. The party's sweeping policy of self-determination was broadly defined by party operatives as "democracy at its essence: self-government, self-organization, social and economic equality."[6] Starting with a ringing declaration on self-determination at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, party policy also mandated that henceforth, the Communist Party would undertake serious operations in the South. As will be seen, this shift in emphasis resulted in the acceleration of organizational efforts in Georgia. Central to the party's southern initiative was a vigorous appeal to the unemployed, whose ranks included large numbers of African American workers.

As the economic crisis deepened, other groups also entered the competition for the loyalty of jobless Georgians. The Georgia Socialist Party, dominated by its conservative old-guard element, eschewed organiza-

tional work among African Americans and was more interested in building bridges with a cautious American Federation of Labor, which itself operated from a very narrow base within the craft unions in a largely unorganized state. On still another level, liberal organizations such as the NAACP and Neighborhood Union were firmly rooted in the black middle class, while the careful but progressive CIC sought to forge a link between white and black professionals that might at least indirectly provide some relief and support for the suffering masses. Liberals generally made modest demands on the power structure that controlled politics, government, and social provision in Depression-era Georgia. The pages that follow make it clear that by far the most aggressive organization in meeting the needs of the underclass was the small but militant Communist Party, which struggled mightily to maintain itself in a hostile environment.

In sum, this book focuses on the Left and its initiatives in the organizational struggles of the Georgia jobless as well as the larger worker community. Because the unemployed movement was strongest in the Atlanta area, it also emphasizes the growth of protest activity in that area. Too long overlooked or at least poorly understood, the state's small but vocal radical movement staked a claim to a place among the forces advocating for the victims of the Depression crisis. In the process, Communists, Socialists, and even some progressive union leaders became important players in the story of Georgia's worker culture and political activism in the 1930s. As shown here, radicalism opened a window of opportunity for those existing on the bottom rail of the state's society, including both resentful African Americans and long-suppressed poor whites seeking their own economic and social liberation. By examining the words and deeds of activist leaders and the organizations they represented, it is possible to unlock the stories of the people they led, just as the words of the dispossessed will document the misery faced by an element in Georgia's population not always featured in the historical record to date.

Negative reaction to the rising unemployed protests from both public officials and the bastions of the Georgia power structure reflected white concerns over the prominent role played by African Americans and Communists in the movement. This study emphasizes the successes of radicals in reaching the black population, especially in such areas as Atlanta, Columbus, and Savannah; these advances, in turn, alarmed the state's elite leaders, who perceived in jobless activism a threat to long-accepted southern social practices and racial preferences. The prospect of organized and newly active African Americans threatened to upset the existing labor system and the low-wage economy that constituted the state's competitive advantage over other regions in an already depressed economy. Even

more disturbing, though vastly overemphasized by both management and state and local officialdom, was the social challenge implied by the sometimes-integrated character of the unemployed movement. To most white Georgians, the prospect of interracial collaboration meant an end to the social hierarchy that prevailed in the age of Jim Crow.

Juxtaposed against the social threat perceived by elite groups was the reality of radical activists of all stripes among the proponents of jobless organizations. Although Socialists could be found among unemployed organizers, it was the active involvement of the Communist Party in the movement that galvanized management reaction and official repression. The northern backgrounds of many Communist organizers enabled the critics to assert that unemployed activism was not rooted in southern problems or initiatives, but rather in the subversive manipulation of uneducated citizens by dangerous "outside agitators," who were to remain a staple target in the official narrative repeated again and again by opponents of social and economic change. Anticommunism and regional xenophobia thus blended in the rhetoric of resistance that was to damage both the labor movement and civil rights struggles in Georgia and the South.

The purpose of this study is to unravel both the truths and myths that were born of the worker response to adversity in a troubled time. It demonstrates that in several situations, the presumably inarticulate gained a voice and expressed their outrage against the vicissitudes of a failing capitalist system. Georgia workers, in response to an intolerable economic burden, proved willing to employ collective means to achieve personal goals and assert their self-respect. Given sharp provocation, the unemployed accepted the legitimacy of collective action in crisis situations such as those created by Depression-era joblessness and management exploitation. The rise of the Georgia unemployed movement confirms the viability of mass action for men and women in desperate circumstances. Likewise, the initial response of the state's workers to the great nationwide textile strike of 1934 provides convincing evidence of openness to union organization, at least until the power of the state and intractable management crushed their early aspirations.

The failure of the textile strike and the growth of the unemployed movement will also remind readers of the New Deal's impact in a region deemed the nation's primary economic problem. Some historians have argued that in the final analysis, the New Deal proved a failure in Georgia, especially if success is to be measured in terms of economic recovery. Historian Michael Holmes concluded that while there were some "limited achievements," the New Deal was unsuccessful in changing the

deplorable "conditions that had caused the depression in the first place."[7] Similarly, this study reveals that the Roosevelt program certainly did not end the unemployment that had impoverished the underclass occupying the bottom rail in the Georgia economy. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the Roosevelt program, including rural relief and spending by the Public Works Administration (PWA), Civil Works Administration (CWA), and Works Progress Administration (WPA), offered at least a modicum of assistance to the casualties of the systemic crisis of the 1930s. Moreover, the New Deal wrought a profound change of long-term significance: even in the heart of states' rights America, Georgia citizens now learned to look to Washington for political and economic solutions to their personal problems.

Ample evidence of this shift may be found in the Georgia unemployed movement, especially among those who rallied to the union banner or swelled the ranks of the Workers Alliance and other jobless organizations. Over time, novice activists would become accustomed to the idea of looking beyond their communities or even their state for aid in pressing for government assistance. To these neophytes in the world of bureaucratic politics, it increasingly seemed appropriate to appeal to national pressure groups, whether the Workers Alliance, American Federation of Labor (AFL), Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), or even the Communist Party, for support in their effort to demand economic aid on a national scale. This transition mirrors a more profound conversion experienced by the most vulnerable element in the Georgia working class, which involved a new assumption of federal responsibility for the economic and social well-being of the body politic. Even in the heart of states' rights country, most jobless citizens came to share an expectation that the national government must be the key participant in solving problems of national scope. While the acceptance of the modified welfare state would never be as widespread in Georgia as was true in the North, the concept of federal obligation to the underclass was embraced by the poorest of the poor in the economically devastated South. This new sense of entitlement, which Lizabeth Cohen has labeled "worker statism,"[8] was the key ideological product of a broken economy and the governmental innovation associated with Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal; and even in remote Georgia, the shift in the center of power from the states to Washington, D.C., though not universally welcomed, would come to be widely understood.

As the forces of economic and social change reshaped the southern political landscape, traditional institutions were disrupted as never before. In a region that had been historically unreceptive to unionism the

Depression years witnessed a glimmer of hope among proponents of organized labor. Stronger in industrial Alabama, the union movement nonetheless asserted itself in the unfriendly environs of urban and small-town Georgia. Inspired by what appeared to be the New Deal's call to arms in 1934, legions of Georgia mill workers would flock to the union banner during the dramatic and divisive national textile strike in that momentous year of conflict. While ultimately a lost crusade, what is often overlooked is the reality that despite management's vigorous campaign of vilification and resistance, workers were clearly prepared to embrace collective institutions in an effort to improve their drab and difficult lives. At a distance but firmly aligned with the supporters of the abortive textile drive, the building trades and skilled workers of Georgia also moved to consolidate their position as labor's elite; and when the CIO revolution re-energized a complacent labor movement, the historically narrow base of the union movement would expand to incorporate new workers throughout Georgia, but especially among auto workers, machinists, and textile workers in industrial Atlanta and other urban outposts. In what proved to be a narrow moment of opportunity, the state's union movement seemed situated on the brink of a significant advance. This study emphasizes the potential for organization and the advances that were made, including previously ignored union services to the jobless and destitute.

Despite these modest gains, organized labor in Georgia failed to advance much beyond its narrow base among skilled workers in the 1930s. Substantial growth occurred in such textile centers as Dalton, Augusta, and Atlanta, but the union movement never made a full commitment to the state's most vulnerable workers. Yet when the unemployed moved to organize in 1935 and 1936, the Georgia Federation of Labor, led by the dynamic A. Steve Nance, briefly sided with WPA workers, primarily to ensure that the prevailing wage be preserved. Throughout the remainder of the 1930s, the AFL obsession with wage standards was to limit the effectiveness of existing union institutions in addressing the needs of jobless Georgians. As a consequence, leadership of the unemployed movement fell to other less cautious bodies; this outcome should not, however, obscure the significant steps taken by organized labor to reach out to jobless unionists and sometimes their nonunion brothers and sisters.

In the absence of aggressive initiative from traditional unions, radical organizations moved quickly to fill the leadership vacuum. From the earliest days of the Great Depression, both Socialists and Communists vied for influence among the jobless. Before long, it became clear that the Georgia Socialist Party was an empty vessel, hopelessly handicapped by the dominance of the party's conservative old guard. As a result of

Socialist ineptitude, a militant Communist Party soon asserted its leadership of the state's struggling unemployed movement. From 1931 on, party organizers worked with the unemployed to build a movement that was to enjoy its first major success in 1932 with a mass demonstration in Atlanta led by the charismatic Angelo Herndon. It is important to recognize that from the beginning, the heart of the membership base of the Unemployed Councils and later the Workers Alliance was found in the African American working class, which had been brutally battered by the ravages of widespread joblessness. This study demonstrates that over the Depression years, whether the locale was Atlanta, Savannah, Macon, Augusta, or Columbus, it was the black community that provided the primary mass base from which the Communist Party exercised its leadership of the unemployed movement.

As we shall see, both the Unemployed Councils and the Workers Alliance were mass organizations that proved tailor-made for Communist Party organizing. This analysis demonstrates the crucial role played by the party in mobilizing jobless workers as a social and political force in urban Georgia. While the bulk of the Council and Alliance membership never joined the Communist Party, large numbers of jobless Georgians were enthusiastic participants in these groups. The party's formation of such mass organizations enabled its leaders to work directly with politically unaffiliated members to advance a progressive agenda, build Communist influence with the masses, and, where possible, bring new activists into the party itself. In the process, Communists became well known as the activists who were most willing to advance the interests of the needy in the political arena and with the institutions and individuals encountered in the welfare bureaucracy.

The response to Communist initiative on behalf of the unemployed varied according to the economic and social circumstances of the observer. Atlanta's black and white elite organizations recoiled at the idea of radical influence among the poor and jobless. While white suspicions were reflected in state suppression of radicalism, African American leaders worked more subtly through such groups as the NAACP, Urban League, and CIC to dampen enthusiasm for Communists and their mass organizations. Previous scholarship has demonstrated that elite organizations discouraged support for Communist activities, though not all African Americans heeded their warnings. This analysis underscores not only the depth of grassroots support for unemployed organizers, including Communists, but also the significance of breakaway black leaders as backers of the movement; indeed, some of the unemployed movement's strongest boosters could be found among the black clergy, some of whom

responded by cooperating with the leaders of the key jobless groups. And among working-class African Americans, there was little hesitancy to embrace the Councils and the Alliance, which were, after all, bodies that worked to address the problems of the black masses on the ground in ways not envisioned by Georgia's elite groups.[9]

While the white support base of the unemployed movement was narrower, there is evidence that due to the equality of human suffering, some white workers were prepared to identify with and cooperate with African Americans and radicals to build a class movement. It is equally true that in at least some Georgia communities, such as Dalton and Rossville, unemployed organizations such as the Workers Alliance were dominated by displaced white workers and their leaders. Regardless of race, mudsills were mudsills, and the cauldron of severe economic distress produced some surprising alliances that alarmed the guardians of the traditional system of racial preferment. While segregated locals were common in the Workers Alliance and labor unions, it is clear that muted cross-racial collaboration was not unusual; more to the point, both the Alliances and Councils were committed to nondiscriminatory treatment of the unemployed. And once the Roosevelt administration's welfare bureaucracy was in place, the pressure for equal access to government programs became even more insistent. The efforts of federal administrators confirm the significance of the nationalizing and centralizing tendency of the New Deal.

One of the key dimensions of the New Deal program was government endorsement of labor organization and the creation of new institutional mechanisms through the National Recovery Administration (NRA) and the Wagner Act to promote that end. The mainstream labor movement that evolved in Georgia remained narrowly based and racially segregated. In contrast to the unemployed movement, most union organization was essentially a white phenomenon in the state. The more segregated character of the established unions reflected several realities that shaped the development of the movement. First, the state's trade union successes were largely a story of embattled skilled workers who organized to protect hard-won wage/hours standards; the movement therefore excluded most black laborers by definition, since despite prominent exceptions among bricklayers and a few crafts, skilled trades were often closed to African Americans. Likewise, when the great uprising of 1934 broke out, its composition reflected the reality that most inside work in the textile mills was reserved for white operatives. While separate black locals were sometimes chartered, the national textile strike of 1934 was engineered and

carried out by the whites who made up the bulk of the labor force. Finally, once the walkouts occurred, management predictably reacted with alarmist charges of Communist inspiration and sometimes responded with overwhelming force and official repression that doomed the strikers to isolation and ultimate failure. The sequel to this outcome would be a systematic purge of unionists that contributed significantly to the worsening of an already dire unemployment crisis. The long-term implications of this result were profound: in the wake of the failed strike, many workers withdrew support for unionism and set the stage for future reluctance to embrace collectivism as the answer to worker problems. This growing resistance to labor organization, together with historical amnesia concerning the militancy of 1934, was to seriously damage the interests of workers and discourage unionism, thereby contributing to a low-wage future for Georgia laborers.

From 1935 forward, the unemployed movement would accelerate, due to both widespread joblessness and the new organizational opportunity created by expanded New Deal programs, developments that coincided with the national unification of the unemployed movement. With the rise of the Workers Alliance of America, first as a radical voice for the unemployed and eventually as an advocacy organization based on the labor union model, the movement became increasingly institutionalized. Coopted by the New Deal and its bureaucracy, the Alliance emerged as a labor union that helped jobless workers mitigate the harshest effects of a lingering economic crisis and worked to advance the interests of the underclass in the arena of politics. The increasingly influential Workers Alliance was an expression of the Depression-era belief in the union as an extended social family. A meaningful voice for the jobless in 1937 and 1938, the mature Alliance fell victim to its own bureaucratization as well as a changing labor market that began to ease the job crisis after 1939.

Equally problematic for the prospects of the Workers Alliance as an unemployed union was the rising influence of Communist activists in the Georgia Alliance, a trend that was widely publicized and sometimes exaggerated by public officials and elite group critics of the organization. Adopting a battle-tested strategy, management and its allies in officialdom conflated the rise of unionism and unemployed activism with both the alleged menace of Communism on the march and the social threat of racial amalgamation. By 1940 a battered Georgia Workers Alliance would decline precipitously, its membership decimated and influence greatly reduced, as it gradually became the refuge of the "unemployables," such as the elderly, handicapped, female, and unskilled.

Once the Workers Alliance entered this period of contraction, it also became the voice of the most hard-pressed elements in Georgia's African American community. The organization's history and reputation gained for it the respect of Georgia's working-class black population, including men and women who were not deterred by the increased influence of Communists in the affairs of the Alliance. This loyalty underscores the hard fact that in the worst of times, it was the Communist activists who offered concrete aid to the destitute, whether through resistance to evictions, intervention with the welfare bureaucracy, provision of legal defense, or the exertion of pressure on legislative and executive bodies on behalf of Depression victims. Indeed, the heart of the support base for Georgia's small Communist Party could be found among African Americans who understood that the Workers Alliance, like the Unemployed Councils of the early Depression, was sometimes able to make good on promises in ways not contemplated by skittish middle-class elite organizations. In short, in the words of Hosea Hudson, the Alliance and the Communist Party were willing to broach the question of "social equality," which highlighted the ugly truth that "the poor white worker didn't have social equality no more than the Negro had (*sic*)." It was, he argued, the Communists who dared to raise the "class question" and promise "no discrimination."[10]

Building on Hudson's insight, this study demonstrates that even on the barren ground of Georgia, there was a fleeting moment of opportunity, in which a cross-racial class alliance seemed within reach. While compromises were made to accommodate southern social and racial traditions, including a knowing nod to Jim Crow, it was the Communists who provided assistance in the streets and most openly challenged the "Georgia way of life" often invoked by public officials and business leaders; and working-class African Americans stubbornly stood with the party-led unemployed organizations while fully understanding the ideological proclivities of their advocates. Moreover, it also becomes clear that in moments of dire economic need, some hard-pressed whites were willing to collaborate through these pressure groups on the basis of shared interests. The analysis that follows, then, becomes an exploration of both African American agency and tentative interracial cooperation, however imperfectly realized; it suggests that class identity held potential for superseding racial antagonism.

Despite the momentary hope of such collaboration in a class movement, economic, social, and political realities soon asserted themselves as elite groups and political authorities combined to crush radical dreams and black aspirations. Through state suppression of radicals and brutal

economic repression, the Georgia political establishment would succeed in marginalizing proponents of social change, who were isolated and identified as enemies of the state. Whenever left-wing organizations seemed to threaten the segregated social order, the bloody shirt of radicalism was employed with devastating effect to limit their attractiveness to potential class allies, especially their appeal to impoverished white workers and both black and white elite groups.

The successful employment of anticommunist imagery combined with the debilitating impact of worker economic dependency to seal the fate of collective action as a solution to Georgia's endemic poverty and chronically depressed wage standards. The entrapment of white and black workers in a cheap labor market would be the ultimate price paid by nonunion laborers for a perceived independence within a context of racial segregation and economic subordination. The losing struggle of community and union organizers over the years would eventually confirm the harsh reality that in Georgia, as in other deep South states, race ultimately trumped class as a determinant of social, economic, and political preferences, thus confirming the hard lesson learned by radicals and community organizers in the troubled 1930s.

Superimposed on these factors, the widespread acceptance of the canard of Georgia's victimization at the hands of allegedly dangerous "outside agitators" helped to squelch the appeal of collectivism in the 1930s, just as it would be used to combat future efforts to disrupt the accepted Georgia social structure. The presence of northern organizers in both the Communist Party and the Workers Alliance was used effectively against the unemployed movement throughout its brief life. The threat of external influence merged with the fear of racial amalgamation to reinforce middle-class and even working-class suspicions concerning the motives and goals of both unemployed activists and labor organizations that threatened to upset the social status quo in Depression-era Georgia. The power of these ideas in the hands of the Georgia elite would soon become evident to Communist activists, unemployed organizers, and labor unionists, all of whom faced long odds during the years of economic crisis. Once these ideas merged into a coherent ideology expressed by the state's ruling classes, the bulk of Georgia's white workers bought into the argument to the detriment of racial tolerance and integration in the subsequent generation. Not until the rise of the modern civil rights movement would the local power structure's hold on the minds of most white Georgians be broken.

Despite that outcome, this analysis of the unemployed movement demonstrates that in the generation before the civil rights movement, there

was a strain of resistance alive among not only working-class Georgians but also middle-class advocates of a moderate southern liberalism. This minor strain of reform thought was present in the form of the radical southern clergy, the Highlander educators, the CIC, liberal journalists, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and the emerging Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW), all of whom questioned the traditions of the South, including rigid segregation and hostility to the labor movement and other forms of collective enterprise.[11] While elite reformers worked to bring about racial amelioration without disturbing the Georgia power structure, some working-class organizers, most evidently the Communists, who rejected the existing social and economic system and the CIO operatives, who struggled to reshape the outlines of the existing economic order, saw the potential for building a movement rooted in class unity. While Communists advocated a program based on the concept of inevitable class warfare, it was ultimately the effective combination of elite groups and entrenched political authorities who were to emerge the winners in Georgia's class war.

The story of the community, labor, and unemployed organizers of the Great Depression illuminates the aspirations and contributions to the future of racial reform made by the pariahs of 1930s Georgia. The history of the Unemployed Councils, Workers Alliance, and the Communist Party, as well as the efforts of an outmanned and beleaguered labor movement, demonstrates that there was, at least in the minds of radicals and liberals, the real hope of cementing class unity in the desperate organizational struggles that temporarily brought elements of the underclass together in pursuit of better lives for Georgia's dispossessed workers and their families. In the final analysis, the Workers Alliance and even the less successful Unemployed Councils could aspire to that end because they possessed an asset beyond the reach of the middle-class elites who purported to speak for both African American and white working-class interests: namely, a durable popular following consolidated by the growth of government programs under the New Deal, which expanded the field for mass mobilization.

Although the mass organizations of 1930s Georgia were eventually weakened by widespread adherence to Jim Crow social practices, the power of capital, the relative weakness of the union tradition, and the omnipresent specter of race, an examination of the unemployed movement and popular reaction to radical initiatives, especially among the African American jobless, demonstrates that a subtle collectivist theme was present in Depression Georgia. This book provides evidence that worker organization was considered a viable option by the impoverished masses

faced with economic and social adversity. The experience of Georgia's jobless legions suggests that there was another South in which the disinherited looked to radical social and political activists for a solution to festering inequalities; their story, largely forgotten, deserves its place in the grand narrative of modern southern history.

Economic Crisis as Opportunity

The Great Depression as Seedbed for Radical Activism in Georgia, 1928–1930

Following the onset of the Great Depression, the fortunes of American working families sank as the ravages of a battered economy hit home. While the national unemployment statistics record the misery visited upon the highly urbanized Northeast and Midwest in stark numbers, the South suffered from poverty levels found in relatively few of the more densely populated areas of the United States. As historian David Goldfield has observed, the cities of the South qualified as the country's "basket case" during the hungry thirties. What further complicated the southern predicament was the region's predominantly rural economy and the abject poverty that pervaded the area soon to be labeled the nation's "foremost economic problem." In no southern state was the human distress more acute than in Georgia, where the rural poor and displaced urban laborers struggled to cope with the ravages of a broken economy. Confronted with the consequences of soil exhaustion, insect infestation, and a collapsed market, hard-scrabble farmers, many of them tenants and sharecroppers, struggled unsuccessfully to compete with their counterparts in the more fertile and productive cotton lands to the West. Following his return in 1930 to Wrens in eastern Georgia, the budding novelist Erskine Caldwell regarded the condition of the landless and poverty-stricken of his home region as "dispiriting," recoiling at the "sight of children's stomachs bloated from hunger" side by side with the elderly "too weak to walk to the fields to search for something to eat." With two-thirds of Georgians residing in "unincorporated rural territory," the widespread dispersal of

the population ensured great difficulty in the delivery of statewide aid to the unemployed. Theirs, it seemed, was a losing battle.[1]

Despite the devastating effect of the Great Depression on both urban and rural workers, the human casualties of a broken economy refused to submit quietly to their fate; and before long many unemployed Georgians were prepared to embrace collective action to redress their grievances. This chapter demonstrates that the economic crisis paved the way for the development of a radical movement in Georgia, which as early as 1930 would reach a point of confrontation over the demands of the unemployed and the state's response to the rise of collective action. As will be seen, the eventual result was the rise of several militant organizations, the likes of which had not been part of the previous social and political landscape in what had once been a conventional rural southern state. Whether Socialist, Communist, liberal Democratic, or politically unaffiliated, these working class activist groups would challenge the economic and political overlords who dominated the social structure of Georgia in the 1930s. Their most dramatic departure from the politics of the past lay in the unprecedented, if momentary, willingness of the white and black jobless to bridge the racial gap that had separated them in previous years and ensured their economic marginalization.

While impoverished farmers fought to meet the most basic human needs, the residents of Georgia's cities and towns confronted a serious unemployment crisis that exacerbated long-standing class and racial tensions as the competition for scarce jobs heated up. On the surface, unemployment in the Depression's first year did not appear alarming. The grossly understated unemployment census of 1930 reported joblessness in Georgia's largest cities ranging from 6.2 percent in Atlanta and Augusta to 8.2 percent in Macon, levels that, while elevated, seemed manageable. More realistic were the figures provided by federal agencies, which estimated that in the years between 1930 and 1933, almost 50 percent of Atlanta's employable workers were unable to find employment. And in some black districts, unemployment ranged as high as 75 percent, a figure that reflected a common business policy dictating that when employment contracted, "a black person would be bumped by [a] white person for his job." In 1935 the federal Committee on Economic Security concluded that throughout Georgia, unemployment for those years ranged around 19 percent, slightly less than was true in urban states like Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York, where almost 27 percent of workers were without work. The committee argued that the lower figure for Georgia probably reflected the greater opportunity for the urban unemployed to move out of the industrial labor market to

rural areas. In neighboring Alabama, meanwhile, the situation was even worse. As early as 1928, unemployment in Birmingham was reportedly 18 percent, and by 1930 white unemployment for the city had reached 32 percent.[2] While the Georgia and Alabama unemployment figures failed to match the disaster in the industrial Midwest, the South was in dire straits at the outset of the Great Depression.

Although radical organizer Angelo Herndon asserted that it was impossible to secure accurate statistics for Atlanta because city officials "kept this information carefully hidden," the city did acknowledge that in 1932 some 25,000 families out of a population of 150,000 were on relief. Moreover, even these statistics miss the devastating human impact of unemployment levels that grew by the day. Communists maintained that hundreds of jobless Atlantans were intentionally kept off the relief rolls, a policy that allegedly contributed to the misery of both black and white workers. Depression survivors vividly recall walking the streets of Atlanta to seek employment or beg for coffee money. Domestic worker Willie Mae Cartwright asserted that "jobs was hard to find . . . there just wasn't no work to be found." One daughter of a skilled worker, Nellie Bryant, remembered "that is when my daddy stopped working altogether," and "couldn't find anything to do." For another Atlantan, the Depression meant existing on a steady diet of corn meal, while still another expressed vivid memories of "kids in garbage cans, getting food." Social worker Augusta Dunbar recoiled in horror at the specter of "people fainting in the streets from hunger" and undertook a new career in social services in response. Unimpressed by public social provision, the radical firebrand Nannie Leah Washburn later dismissed the city's response as hopelessly inadequate in light of so many "miserable" people in a "destitute condition." A reluctant migrant to Atlanta, Washburn entered the textile mills in part because the family's deprivation "just broke [her] heart," and she was unwilling to "pile up on" her hard-pressed mother. She bitterly described Atlanta's practice of collecting rotten food from the farmers market for distribution to welfare recipients, a policy that got local unemployed protests "started off."[3]

Throughout Georgia the greatest burden fell upon the African American community, which experienced elevated levels of unemployment and poverty. Teacher E. T Lewis recalled that "most of the Negro men were not able to get a job, and they worked for a dollar and a half a day." The predicament for African Americans was an old story, as in Lewis's words, "the Negro had always been in depression." But for black workers the financial burden was exacerbated by the harshness with which it fell upon them. The economic downturn sharpened competition for employment

and spawned several movements to preserve jobs for white workers. These movements, discussed later, were clearly intended to ensure the preservation of the South's traditional social and economic structure, an edifice built on the suppression of its large black population and the economic bondage that supported a semi-feudal system. In Georgia, vigilante groups such as the Black Shirts and, later, the Men of Justice grew rapidly as a result of their shrill demand for the replacement and eviction of black workers in favor of the white unemployed. The Black Shirt phenomenon of 1930 essentially blamed African Americans for white unemployment rather than focus on the collapsed economy that beggared both. Yet the powerful economic forces unleashed by the Great Depression challenged these assumptions when African Americans and white radicals organized in 1930 to meet the needs of Georgia's underclass. Nannie Leah Washburn recalled the unemployed protests of the early 1930s as "a first coming out in the open, you know the blacks to organize unemployed."[4]

Historians have long understood that the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA) maintained an active interest in organizing within the state's African American community, a commitment that found expression in the party's co-sponsorship of the Angelo Herndon defense as well as its work on behalf of the "Atlanta Six" defendants, all charged with violating Georgia's hoary insurrection statute. However, the recent opening of the Russian archives to American researchers furnishes fresh source material with which to reconstruct the story of not only these celebrated legal struggles but also the organizational work among the unemployed that lay at the heart of the Communist effort in the South. It is therefore possible to document the struggle of the unemployed in Georgia and the free speech battle occasioned by the state's attempt to suppress radicalism in light of new evidence of Communist activism on behalf of the jobless. These sources shed light on a neglected aspect of unemployed organizing during the Great Depression, a topic heretofore explored by historians largely within the context of urban, industrial America.[5] Close examination of the Georgia movement demonstrates that the potential for a mass-based worker movement existed in such varied locales as Atlanta, Savannah, Columbus, Augusta, Rome, and Dalton, presenting an opportunity that was to remain only partially realized due to the exertion of overwhelming state pressure against both the dispossessed and their erstwhile leaders.

While organizational activity among the Georgia unemployed developed more slowly than similar efforts in the urban areas of the North, the state's jobless reacted to their economic dilemma in the context of a wider national movement. In hard-hit industrial states, the Hoover years

were marked by increasingly militant worker responses to the scourge of joblessness. Throughout the country, displaced workers turned to left-led voluntary associations and political groups for leadership in the struggle to meet the most basic of human needs. The Communist Unemployed Councils, Socialist Workers Alliance, Trotskyist Unemployed League, and other unaffiliated organizations vied for the support of the jobless in a class movement of unprecedented proportions. These new mass organizations displayed the characteristic features of broad social movements, such as grassroots pressure, democratic control, and intense collective consciousness. As unemployed activism increased, various political bodies embraced the movement in an effort to advance partisan programs. While Socialists eventually competed for the support of the jobless, the first group to offer significant assistance to the unemployed was the Communist Party, which had long championed the cause of the nation's dispossessed.[6] When Georgia workers mobilized for pressure group action, therefore, it was Communists who offered leadership in the drive to find solutions for their problems when the traditional purveyors of social provision proved unequal to the task.

From the beginning, the demands of the jobless imposed a heavy burden on a Georgia welfare system that placed primary responsibility in the hands of county and local governments, in cooperation with private relief organizations. Although modest state allocations for relief increased slightly in the early Depression years, communities struggled to meet the growing client load occasioned by the economic crisis. Several communities issued fiat money, either in payment to public employees or as transfer payments to unemployed citizens willing to work in "self-help" programs. A number of cities established free employment bureaus, while in others, including Atlanta, Macon, Augusta, and Savannah, the privately funded Better Business Commissions aided in job searches by systematically screening local newspapers for job openings. And in Augusta, local civic clubs operated their own employment agency in 1930 and 1931. Meanwhile, a back-to-the-land movement took shape in Hancock County and Columbus in deep southern Georgia, though the idea never caught on in most urban areas of the state. For example, in Atlanta the Chamber of Commerce endorsed the back-to-the-land concept, but soon abandoned the idea when it learned that the local relief commission and county commissioners opposed the proposed program. And in some of the larger communities, local nonrelief organizations, such as the churches, retail merchants associations, Traveler's Aid Society, Salvation Army, private clubs, and even independent business firms, came to the assistance of the destitute, occasionally in cooperation with local Community Chest

organizations. In rural Georgia, where financial resources were sharply limited, even fewer programs assisted the unemployed and indigent. Here landowners and bankers had had ample opportunity to experiment with crop restriction and land use schemes that had not been notably successful in reducing the large inventories of excess cotton on the market. Consequently, the welfare burden had reached alarming proportions by the late 1920s, creating a crisis with which local institutions were unprepared to deal. The value system of rural and small town areas mandated a dominant role for private charities, whose resources proved unequal to the task. Prominent among these organizations was the Red Cross, which provided the lion's share of local relief in a state whose citizens prized self-reliance and resisted charitable efforts.[7]

So it was that private charities shouldered most of the welfare burden in a state generally hostile to the very concept of relief. By one count, there were throughout Georgia only seven family welfare societies, seven Red Cross chapters, fourteen Salvation Army units, and eleven county welfare associations. And the efforts of these groups were further handicapped by widespread disapproval of their work. Sounding a theme that was to characterize the predominant response to social provision in Georgia, whether private or public, many planters and other employers complained bitterly that Red Cross programs caused labor shortages statewide, especially during the harvest. Landowners consistently argued that "people in Red-Cross lines won't work," yet just as regularly they insisted that their workers apply to the Red Cross after the harvest. In the words of one planter, "the more tenants get from the Red Cross, the less they'll have to have from the landlord."[8]

The strength of traditional assumptions concerning the role of the state in meeting social needs was evident in Georgia's mixed response to the Hoover administration's modest attempt in 1931 to coordinate relief efforts through the President's Organization on Unemployment Relief (POUR). When POUR officials in Washington urged the creation of new local committees for the management of the relief crisis, many Georgia cities and towns responded cautiously, at best. Atlanta, Savannah, Columbus, Barnesville, Carrolton, Manchester, Griffin, La Grange, and Trion all assured the federal government that they were capably handling the relief load, which seemed manageable without federal assistance. Meanwhile, Floyd County civic leaders and businessmen worked to persuade impoverished white textile mill operatives that their preferment in hiring provided them a privileged position in a collapsing labor market. Public officials and community leaders in Atlanta, where the Better Business Commission and Community Chest were both active,

predicted that the "unemployment situation will be taken care of to a reasonable extent." Pointedly assuring POUR that the city "recognizes [its] responsibilities," the Atlanta Community Chest confidently asserted that it would be "somewhere in the neighborhood of [its] quota." Even more direct were officials in La Grange, who anticipated "no difficulty" and Trion, where officials asserted that the unemployment situation was "practically void." Common to these reactions was a spirit of confidence shared by local business, private charities, and public officials, not to mention an element of skepticism about federal intervention. Expressing what historian Douglas Smith calls the "sunshine syndrome," chambers of commerce and daily newspapers persistently forecast an early return to prosperity in 1930 and 1931.[9]

This spirit of boosterism and the denial of severe problems were not shared by jobless Georgians, some of whom looked for leadership in the struggle to gain official recognition of their plight. It is clear that Communists saw the faltering economy of the 1930s as a golden opportunity to advance radical goals and worker political consciousness. On a national scale the Communist Party was the first worker organization to grasp the potential of the employment crisis of the early Depression as an organizing opportunity. While traditional labor and business groups seemed paralyzed by the problem of rising joblessness, the party seized the initiative with the establishment of its Unemployed Councils under the auspices of the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), the successor organization to the Party's Trade Union Educational League (TUEL). Prior to 1929, TUEL had been the national party's vehicle for working from within established AFL unions. Starting in September 1929, however, TUUL turned its attention to founding unions independent of the AFL organizations, in a policy shift consistent with the strategic theme of the Communist Party's strategic line during its radical "third period" of party development. Once the economy collapsed, it made perfect sense to openly sponsor Unemployed Councils composed of jobless workers, representatives of revolutionary unions, unorganized workers, and other unemployed citizens. The Councils specialized in relief protests, resistance to evictions, and political agitation for improved welfare provision. Affiliated with TUUL, these bodies and their members were regarded by party officials as the vanguard of the revolutionary movement. Before long, unemployed organizing became one of the Communist Party's highest priorities as the party came to regard the fight against unemployment as the "tactical key" to success in the American class struggle.[10]

Although local traditions and deeply held values militated against the development of a coordinated movement to advance worker causes in

Georgia, the Communist Party dedicated itself to the daunting task of mass mobilization in the heart of the South, starting with an appeal to African Americans with an emphasis on self-determination in the Black Belt areas of south central and southwestern Georgia. Self-determination meant political freedom and majority rule, control of the local economy, and, theoretically, the right to secede from the United States if that was the will of black majorities; in practice the idea quickly became a future objective more than a short-term goal. Yet as early as August 1928, discussions within the Comintern and the Lenin School were focused on the creation of a Negro republic in the American South, which in turn led to the American party's decision to move into the rural South with an aggressive organizational effort. As is shown in chapter 3, this strategic initiative was destined to be a limited success in southwestern Georgia, where the activities of the militant Alabama Communists were well known. In the absence of a strong organizational entity such as the Share Croppers Union and because the national party gave little more than lip service to the concept of self-determination, the Communist Party made only modest inroads into the Georgia Black Belt, where planter resistance militated against African American organizational activity. More promising in the short run was the Atlanta African American community, where the party began to make small inroads by organizing blacks into Unemployed Councils and fought to secure relief for the most needy of the city's jobless citizens. Moreover, by October 1928, party organizers were already preoccupied with preparation for the presidential election, working to place Communist candidate William Z. Foster on the Georgia ballot and arranging for Foster rallies in Birmingham and Atlanta. In these efforts, party activists faced serious obstacles in Georgia, beginning with the intense racial antagonisms that had thus far crippled the party's preliminary organizational efforts.[11]

As early as October 1928, Communist Party field organizer John Di Santo reported slow but certain progress in Atlanta and identified the key issue for radicals in the South: the party was "faced with a tremendous race problem" rooted in "deep prejudice between the white and Negro workers" that prevented integrated unit meetings because "our [white] comrades refuse to meet together with the Negro in the South." Local activist Nannie Leah Washburn confirmed the racial gap in her description of one of the first party-led protests: despite "terrible" conditions, workers "had to see through them a teaching us [*sic*]," and when the small group marched to city hall, "there's some—a few black, but there wasn't very many whites." Appalled by "worse slavery now than before the Civil War," Di Santo proposed the creation of a new party district,

to be headquartered in Atlanta, from which an effort to unite urban and rural workers across racial lines might be launched. Lamenting the narrow Communist Party base in the South, he argued that the "petit bourgeois" Jews who dominated southern party units must be augmented by "American workers," as yet not targeted in the party's regional organizing campaigns. Di Santo spelled out his plans with a call for an Atlanta organizing drive focused on the city's factories, mills, and railroad yards, particularly on the west side where the African American population was concentrated.[12]

Because Atlanta workers were politically inexperienced, Di Santo returned in November to monitor progress in the city, where he found a newly elected African American known locally as Comrade Lake already "doing real communist work" as a "good revolutionist." Moreover, because Lake was "well-connected" with the Savannah black community, prospects to move beyond the Atlanta base seemed bright. Here in Chatham County, an alarmed Rev. F. F. Reese wrote Will Alexander of CIC, complaining of Communist propaganda in the local black press. Admitting that the party's Crusader Press Service had been distributing such material, which was "written with a certain appeal," since 1929, Alexander recommended that a "quiet conference" with the editors of the local black press might solve the problem. From Di Santo's perspective in Atlanta, however, the most significant development of the late 1920s was the diverse racial and gender mix he began to see in the new party units. The willingness of white women and African American men to meet together represented "a greater victory than even bringing together of the Negro and white men."[13] On the eve of the Great Depression, then, Communists stood poised to accelerate their efforts on the barren ground of Georgia.

At first, little progress was made. Communist journalist James Allen, editor of the *Southern Worker*, later asserted that because of the race problem, the South was widely regarded as "the graveyard of radicals." While Georgia's Populist tradition was strong, the Peoples Party had ultimately been defeated, in part due to race-baiting and in part to ballot box manipulation, especially in the union stronghold of Tom Watson's Augusta district. A similar fate befell the African American washerwomen of Atlanta who struck in 1881 and devised novel strategies to carve out an independent place for black womanhood, only to turn northward during World War I in the wake of Jim Crow's tightening hold on the South. Likewise, the African American dockworkers of Savannah, who struck the railroads in 1891, could not sustain the unity achieved in their dramatic moment of solidarity. Ongoing black activism was equally evident

in the rise of Garveyism in Georgia during the 1920s, a movement that established a platform for African American assertiveness by emphasizing separatism and the importance of self-defense on the eve of the Great Depression. Unionism, meanwhile, fared poorly in the state, though the Knights of Labor had organized in the 1880s and Atlanta textile workers had gone out on strike in 1897 in response to management efforts to introduce black spinners at the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill. During World War I, the city was again the site of bitterly divisive efforts to organize the textile industry, a struggle highlighted by the failed Fulton Bag strike of 1914–15, which demonstrated the willingness of workers to coalesce, thus revealing the potential for future labor action. Though memories of the strike had dimmed by the 1930s, this sharp clash was an early illustration of white workers' agency as well as their tentative effort to persuade African Americans to support a militant labor action against steep odds. The confrontation confirmed organized labor's determination to move into the South, which resurfaced in the age of the Great Depression. Moreover, as noted by historian Clifford Kuhn, the Fulton Bag strike had enabled "people who were often despised and humiliated, marginalized, powerless, and subservient to retaliate, to assert their dignity, independence, and self-respect." This lesson was not lost on the rebels of a new era of repression. Yet the defeat of Populism and industrial unionism, as well as the suppression of African American activism, meant that in the years immediately preceding the Great Depression, only Georgia's craft workers succeeded in building an effective trade union movement, most of it concentrated in Atlanta and the north Georgia cities. Although these efforts provided an important training ground for labor activists, virtually no significant radical base existed among exploited Georgia workers in 1929, in part due to the abortive southern textile strikes of the late 1920s, which reinforced the widely held assumption that the labor movement in the South was Communist inspired. Allen recalled that in 1929, after the disastrous failure in the Gastonia textile strike, a few hardy Communist Party activists moved into Atlanta in an attempt to advance organizational work, but that their efforts bore little fruit until 1930 when the party undertook its first serious effort to organize in the deep South.[14] Combined with the impetus supplied by a faltering economy, the renewed Communist drive lay behind the party's first clashes with Georgia authorities in the bellwether year of 1930.

While the early party embraced racial diversity, its initial campaign soon targeted Atlanta's African American population, with considerable success. In January 1930, a hall packed with black enthusiasts heard "Mother" Ella Reeve Bloor call for the "solidarity of black and

white workers," in a "message of organization and defense." Estimates of party membership varied, but Atlanta assistant solicitor general John H. Hudson suggested that by April 1930 there were some three hundred Communists in the community, most of them black. More accurate in his assessment was former black party activist R. C. Miller, who told a House Special Investigating Committee on Communist Party activity in the United States that he had worked with a core group of eight or nine dedicated members, all from the African American community. Although the inner circle of firmly committed members was small, the party's appeal for support among African Americans was substantial. Miller asserted that there were about one hundred Communists in Atlanta and that "mighty near every colored man you met was a sympathizer when he read those [Communist] pamphlets." It was at this time that the Crusader Press Service's propaganda campaign began to reach the African American community through the black press and schools. John W. Crawford of the Atlanta Urban League summarized this activity with the assertion that "the Communists are busy in Atlanta." As Karen Ferguson has noted, in the early 1930s the Communist Party enjoyed a "firm foothold" among the city's jobless and dispossessed African Americans. This argument holds true for the black population, but internal party documents make it clear that among white workers there was much work to be done when the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) launched an organizational effort in 1930. Once party organizers approached Atlanta workers, they discovered that most "had never heard of TUUL and had no conception of its function or its relation to the CP," a problem the activists attributed to the central committee's policy of "arbitrarily removing comrades from the field and failing to send in any substitute." Despite the reported "demoralization" of the Atlanta comrades, an estimated 175 black and white workers attended a February mass meeting, at which more than 50 expressed a willingness to join the party, a result that "showed the possibilities for work in Atlanta."[15]

Beyond the Atlanta urban center, however, fewer Communist activities were evident. By 1931, Communist propaganda circulated within the Savannah African American community, a development that later prompted Rev. F. F. Reece to express his concern to Will Alexander. Meanwhile, party organizers reported "good contacts" in a few Georgia mining districts near Cartersville and Ducktown in Bartow and Forsyth counties, but little came of these initiatives. Further to the west in Rome, Communist Party activists in the National Textile Workers Union (NTWU) managed to build some support in the mills, but by May 1930 party organizer Tom Johnson predicted the loss of these workers if NTWU

failed to send in a union representative quickly. Johnson frankly admitted that the Rome nucleus was "not much" but added that "what we have is correctly organized and functioning." Even more realistic was comrade Mary Dalton, who reported that because TUUL had not kept promises of support, Rome was "bitter to [the party]."[16]

Against the background of growth in Atlanta and minimal support in outlying areas, Georgia Communists prepared for the nationwide unemployment demonstration planned by TUUL for March 6, 1930. The national party conceived of the proposed rally as a commemoration of the eleventh anniversary of the Communist International and as an international protest against unemployment that would bring the Communist Party national publicity for its role in organizing the jobless nationwide. By March 1930 an active Atlanta Unemployed Council, patterned on the party's membership organizations in other urban centers, was "functioning well, formulating plans for March 6 and preliminary demonstrations, and taking responsibility for drawing in members, distribution of leaflets, etc." A major goal of the demonstrations was to underscore the nationwide unity of employed workers and the jobless. While the Communist Party stubbornly clung to its insistence on racially integrated party units and meetings, the result of this policy in Atlanta was reluctance among whites to align themselves with African Americans in the struggle for jobs and relief. Preliminary organization for the event focused on both Atlanta's jobless and employed workers at the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, where overenthusiastic union activists optimistically reported a base of support for the unemployed among mill operatives. Hopeful of black and white worker support, demonstration organizers nervously applied for a parade permit only to be rebuffed by the police. While an outdoor demonstration was proscribed, they gained permission to hold an indoor meeting, which was rescheduled for March 9.[17]

The stage was set for the first major act of political repression that was to launch the Communist Party on the road to prominence in the Atlanta unemployed movement. The events that followed would also solidify the party's position as the major advocate for the African American jobless and result in concrete gains in the struggle to organize a meaningful radical resistance to the Georgia system of welfare provision. By March 1930, therefore, the economic debacle of the Great Depression had created conditions in which collective action could unfold in this most unlikely of venues. Desperate conditions had produced desperate men and women, who were prepared to follow the leadership offered by a political party whose principles and programs had once seemed anathema to Georgians, black and white. The result of these developments was the

rebirth of a radicalism most observers assumed was gone forever with the defeat of Populism and containment of organized labor in Georgia. All eyes now turned toward the plans for the Atlanta commemoration of the national unemployment day that had already electrified a nation. The outcome would not disappoint advocates for the jobless, least of all the struggling Communists still seeking a support base in the southern outpost of Georgia.

The Employment Crisis as Catalyst

Communist Activism and the Insurrection Law, 1930–1933

As the still struggling Communist Party worked to organize the jobless for the March protest, the radical activists could not have anticipated the scope of the official repression that awaited them. The events soon to unfold in Atlanta would be marked by an unprecedented exercise of state power that over the ensuing four years shaped the history of the unemployed movement in Georgia as well as the growth of a radical subculture of resistance. Characterized by a new militancy in the African American community and a remarkable openness to interracial collaboration, the unemployed questioned the policies and practices of Georgia officialdom as never before. Led by Communist organizers but supported by a much broader coalition of sympathizers, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), International Labor Defense (ILD), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), the jobless and their spokespersons demanded relief and waged a stubborn battle to defend their imprisoned leaders, such as the Atlanta Six and Communist Party organizer Angelo Herndon, all charged under the provisions of Georgia's Reconstruction-era insurrection law. In this stage of the unemployed movement, the dissidents enjoyed modest successes in securing assistance, demonstrating in the process that the state's workers were fully able to cooperate in a class-based struggle. Their efforts to organize revealed a measure of agency not always granted working-class activists by the historians who have documented their struggle. Their experience in the pre–New Deal

period provided a preview of potential for organization that was later to be realized once new Roosevelt-era social provision opened the door to greater demands on the federal agencies that arose to meet their needs.

At this seminal stage in its development, the story of Georgia's organized unemployed unfolded largely within the Fulton and DeKalb county region, where the population base was highly concentrated and the economic despair seemed deepest. Supported by an increasingly militant African American community, Communists found the Atlanta area the state's most promising field for the acceptance of a radical analysis of a failed capitalism, which necessarily made it their prime target area. It was here that the Communist Party focused its attention, and it was here that, with the tentative steps taken in the dark days of 1930, the jobless first challenged the power structure that denied them dignity and respect. Consequently, this account of unemployed activism in Georgia must begin with its roots in the Atlanta experience of the early 1930s.

In March 1930, when a small crowd gathered in the black business district in anticipation of the delayed observation of unemployment day, the Atlanta police lay in wait for the announced speakers, Communist organizer M. H. Powers of St. Paul, Minnesota, and Young Communist League representative Joe Carr of Wheeling, West Virginia. But the speeches, which were intended to encourage workers to organize against unemployment and demand unemployment insurance, never occurred. Instead, the authorities broke up the meeting on the grounds that it violated local Jim Crow statutes, detaining the two organizers, who refused to disperse the crowd. Following the arrests, the explosion of a suspicious tear gas bomb, probably thrown by the police, ensured that workers would not organize that day. Subsequently, Assistant Solicitor John Hudson alleged that Powers and Carr had urged the crowd to "smash the police force" and "disregard their authority," comments that Atlanta officials interpreted as an effort to overthrow the constituted authorities of the state—a violation of an insurrection law that traced its origins to the Reconstruction era. A successor statute to pre–Civil War slave revolt legislation, the Georgia law prohibited any attempt, "by persuasion or otherwise," to "induce others to join in any combined resistance to the lawful authority of the State." From the Communist perspective, the updated legislation merely "changed the application of the law from the chattel slave to the wage slave."[1] Charged with attempting to incite insurrection and circulating insurrectionary literature, the two radicals were imprisoned in Fulton Tower and bound over for trial. Thus began the tortured history of Atlanta's determined effort to enforce the dated

insurrection law, a drive to suppress free speech that was to drag on for nearly a decade thereafter.

While the events of March 9 were a setback for the fledgling unemployed movement in Atlanta, state repression failed to silence the voices of the jobless and their leaders, who persisted in their bid to force official recognition of their plight. Local efforts mirrored those of Communist Party organizers throughout the United States, who constituted the catalytic force in mobilizing the nation's jobless for political and social action. Ongoing organizational work among the Atlanta unemployed now reminded workers that Powers and Carr had been jailed because they "dared to organize the unemployed and employed workers." Maintaining that in the eyes of Georgia officials, "unemployment is a crime," the party "proudly [pleaded] guilty to the charge that it endeavor[ed] to organize workers for struggle for their everyday demands."[2]

For the Atlanta authorities, Communism was the overriding issue from the start. Party activists claimed that city officials maintained social control by arresting unemployed workers for vagrancy and suppressing industrial union organizers for "disorderly conduct," thus undermining the key radical organizing strategies. After Mayor James Key asserted that "the only place we have in Atlanta for Communists is behind bars," Hudson promised swift indictment of "revolutionaries," who could expect to be charged with the death penalty for good measure. Boldly insisting that Georgia laws had "plenty of teeth in them," he assured radicals that public officials refused to "tolerate Communists in Georgia."[3] In short, the insurrection law would be employed to stifle political dissent wherever it raised its head.

Undeterred by the threat of repression, party activists countered with a campaign to mobilize liberal sentiment and appeal to working-class audiences in opposition to the official exercise of raw power. While the party-sponsored *Negro Liberator* emphasized the racial dimensions of a prosecution designed to discourage outsiders from "trying to incite 'our niggers' to insurrection," Communist Party district organizer Tom Johnson launched plans for a major May Day demonstration in Atlanta intended to broaden the Carr-Powers issue to include a protest against all forms of social and political oppression in the South. Simultaneously, the Young Communist League's Atlanta Union exhorted its members to turn out in support of the city's "class prisoners." Although a literature distribution program was carried out, May Day came and went without the Communist protest meeting. When the protest leaders arrived, no crowd appeared to support them, a turn of events that persuaded them to avoid arrest by not speaking publicly. In contrast, a major demonstration

did occur in Rome, a one-time Populist stronghold, where an estimated three hundred workers repulsed an attempt to break up the meeting by the local sheriff, an outcome that led Johnson to conclude that "the effect of the meeting was very good."[4]

On the heels of these events, yet another disaster befell party organizers when Atlanta authorities broke up an Atlanta Negro Labor Committee (ANLC) protest meeting aimed at a Texas lynching and charged its leaders with inciting to insurrection. While the event was integrated, most meeting participants were African American, including New York teacher Herbert Newton of ANLC (alias Gilmer Brady) and local printer Henry Story. Both were arrested, along with northern-born white NTWU activists Ann Burlak and Mary Dalton. While labor organizing activated local resistance and Communism alarmed local officialdom, it was the social implications of public interaction among white women and black men that dictated swift and decisive repression. Grasping the significance of the race issue, John Dos Passos of the Emergency Committee for Southern Political Prisoners noted that "a new angle" had been introduced in the insurrection cases by the decision to try the two African American defendants first. To the Emergency Committee, this strategy was "a very obvious and vicious way of attempting to convict the whole group." All detainees, including the previously incarcerated Powers and Carr, soon gained notoriety as the "Atlanta Six," victims of Georgia justice.[5]

The failure to mark May Day, the Carr-Powers arrests, and the ANLC detentions left Atlanta Communists reeling. Even before these reverses, Johnson reported, the Communist Party "was in a bad way," composed as it was of a few "proletarian members" and "petty bourgeois Jews," all of them "completely terrorized by developments." While there was a solid base among African Americans, little "mass work" had been done, and the party had "already been somewhat compromised in the eyes of the workers." Johnson complained bitterly to New York that the district had no one to replace the jailed activists and urged that a party organizer and a NTWU representative be immediately assigned to the Atlanta area in order to restore the party's image among its supporters. As things stood, the Communist Party was "an illegal party in Georgia in every sense of the word," as evidenced by a clear pattern of organizers' arrests and the resultant loss of their services. Party firebrand Nannie Washburn recalled the ever-present threat of police harassment: "very very bad [treatment]" that forced white Communists to meet secretly "at the black people's houses, in the slummy section." Atlanta police regularly raided such meetings, because "you couldn't associate with the black people," and "if they

caught white people around anywhere in the black neighborhood" they would "know it's a Red." To counter this heavy-handed surveillance, Johnson proposed that the Central Committee sponsor a nationwide protest "against the White Terror" and its "manifestations in the South."[6] This plea for national attention to the party's problem in Georgia became a constant theme in reports to the Central Committee throughout the year, as state repression threatened the fragile movement.

Despite the formidable challenge, Johnson saw a great opportunity for party growth because the Atlanta Six cases had "created the basis for building a splendid movement." Washburn remembered the Communists as a source of enlightenment, who stressed literature and press material that made her "put [her] studying cap on." She credited the party activists "for teaching [her] how to read, and understand this society, how it work[ed] and who's the head of it." Limited resources notwithstanding, grassroots organizing of the unemployed went on in Atlanta neighborhoods, where local Communist Party sympathizers fought evictions with spontaneous acts of resistance. Citing the quiet rebellion of several Maher Street militants who forcibly resisted a neighbor's eviction, Communist leaders urged tenants to defy bailiffs by replacing displaced tenants' furniture and belongings. The Maher Street rebels, through open defiance of the authorities, had shown their comrades that "by protecting your neighbor you are protecting yourself." Meanwhile, in the Pittsburgh neighborhood, party activists called for the formation of tenants' leagues composed of employed and unemployed workers, organizations that could fight for cash relief, rent reductions, and an end to evictions.[7] Though the party had been under extreme pressure in Atlanta, these recurring grassroots efforts to cope with the ravages of the Depression confirmed the organizing potential mentioned in Johnson's reports to the Central Committee.

To Johnson, the best response to the paralysis created by the Atlanta Six prosecutions was a temporary alliance of the Communist Party with local liberal and labor elements willing to cooperate in defense of free speech. While it was important to preserve the party's "independent leadership of the campaign," Johnson maintained that it would be advantageous to mobilize local liberal sentiment among those moderates who, though anticommunist, tended to favor "more 'refined' methods of smashing the party than those in use at present." Collaboration would at least allow the Communist Party to "function as a legal party."[8]

Cooperation between radicals and liberals was easier to visualize than implement. From the beginning, the International Labor Defense,

Communist Party, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, American Civil Liberties Union, Commission on Interracial Cooperation, and Georgia Federation of Labor became ensnarled in disagreement over tactics and personnel as each organization pursued its own objectives. Particularly suspicious of Communist intentions were Will Alexander, veteran liberal leader of the CIC, and A. Steve Nance, the popular president of the Atlanta Federation of Trades. Alexander, whose organization had made slow progress in the improvement of race relations in Georgia with a moderate approach, relentlessly attacked the ILD over its tactics and motivations in the identification of appropriate legal counsel and ridiculed "their Communist friends" for following "their old tactics in taking more interest in the propaganda value of the cases than in really trying to get the people properly tried and defended." Privately more sympathetic to the defense, Nance's criticism was more muted, in contrast with that of the conservative leader of the Georgia Federation of Labor (GFL), Louis P. Marquardt, who had earlier discouraged the UTW from organizing in Georgia unless the state federation invited them in. Amid liberal criticism, then, the ILD pressured the NAACP to participate financially in the defense of the two African Americans among the Atlanta Six. In September, the ACLU also urged NAACP to open its purse, since ILD was "badly in need of financial help," and the Civil Liberties Union found itself "in the hole." One ramification of the ILD predicament was its failure to have a full-time presence in Atlanta, which Johnson found "shameful" as a missed opportunity to "build up a movement there."[9] His comments suggest that Alexander's analysis was not entirely without merit; before long the ILD moved to raise the visibility of the Communist Party among African Americans throughout the South.

While legal defense was a critical issue for the indicted workers, the public stance and collective interest of organized labor presented a broader, more complicated set of problems for its adherents. As of 1930, only 7.5 percent of Atlanta workers were unionized, a modest number that constituted more than half of all union laborers in Georgia. Other centers of successful organizing activity were Augusta, Rome, and Columbus, but it is fair to say that outside Atlanta, the union movement struggled for survival. It is equally true that in many remote areas the AFL was a more cautious and probably more conservative body. While unions fought to maintain a precarious foothold in the state, the Depression environment occasioned a renewed effort by the American Federation of Labor to bring Georgia workers into the union family. As early as 1914, the AFL had made Georgia one of several southern states targeted for organizational activity; while the effort had waned in the 1920s, the

Federation was determined to restart that campaign at the outset of the Great Depression. The new drive was part of a comprehensive southern organizing campaign that placed fifty-one AFL organizers in the field throughout the South. In April 1930, the GFL increased its monthly per capita tax from 3 cents to 5 cents per member to support more aggressive recruitment and organizing, with special emphasis on the state's largest body of unorganized operatives, the cotton textile workers. The Federation met with little success; after two years only six new affiliates had joined the Atlanta Federation of Trades, a result that mirrored the statewide trend.[10]

Despite the Federation's activism, this organizational initiative did not usually extend to an interest in the mudsills of Georgia's labor force, the unskilled on the social margin; and certainly organizing the unemployed failed to attract its attention. Studiously avoiding a radical image, the cautious Steve Nance at first distanced himself from the militant street organizing and unemployment protest that attracted the attention of Communist Party activists. After party labor organizer Mary Dalton dared to question William Green at a mass meeting in Atlanta, the anticommunist Nance pressed charges against her; moreover, he served as assistant secretary of the grand jury that indicted her along with Burlak, Newton, and Story. His position mirrored the national federation's suspicion of radicalism and concern over left-wing activism among the unemployed. Both Nance and the state federation's secretary, Louis P. Marquardt, maintained close ties with the prosecution, which led J. Louis Engdahl of the ILD to allege a "connection between the prosecutor's office and the fascist forces of the AFL in the state."[11] By June 1930 there could be little doubt about organized labor's firm anticommunist credentials in Georgia.

Yet not all Georgia labor followed their officers' lead. From the beginning the outspoken Mary Barker of Atlanta, militant president of the American Federation of Teachers, denounced the charges against the Atlanta Six as "ridiculous and outrageous." Barker, a leader of the liberal wing of the Atlanta labor movement, clearly saw the civil liberties issue as well as a potential challenge to union interests in the political prosecutions. Before long, Secretary Karl Karston of the Atlanta Federation of Trades and *Atlanta Journal of Labor* editor Jerome Jones joined the dissenters, who saw a clear threat to organized labor in the insurrection charges. Barker and her Federation allies observed that the Six had experienced considerable success in organizing at the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, which had induced management to endorse actions that were "plainly persecutions." For labor, the issue was clear: "if they [could]

railroad Communists for organizing workers, they can do the same to any other labor organizers."[12]

As a result of increased rank-and-file pressure, the politically powerful Atlanta Federation of Trades eventually moved to counter the openly punitive prosecutions with an endorsement of free speech. The labor body adopted a resolution demanding the prosecution of those indicted only "as citizens and not as communists." Debate over the resolution revealed that the arrests followed efforts by the accused to "expound the doctrine of the labor movement." The Federation concluded that unless free speech was preserved in this case, "organized labor [was] endangered." The resolution chided authorities for reliance on "repression and strong arm tactics" that could only "increase the appeal of the revolutionaries." The *Labor Review* of Augusta agreed that radicalism would not be defeated by "persecuting misguided zealots" with an "antiquated statute utterly inapplicable to the offenses," because "tyranny [begets] radicalism." Commending the Atlanta Federation for its "unequivocal defense of free speech," the Augusta labor organ insisted that the trade union movement "would not be true to its own ideal if it did not grant to others that which it seeks in its own behalf."[13]

A comparable commitment to free speech was made by Atlanta liberals who joined in a public statement attacking the prosecutions and supporting freedom of assembly. This document was in part the product of diligent organizational activity by the ACLU's aggressive field agent in Atlanta, Walter Wilson, who worked effectively behind the scenes to assemble the free speech coalition. Like the labor protest, the liberal manifesto argued that the prosecutions would "only give added weight to the claim that a 'capitalistic' society [was] oppressing the working classes." Signed by an array of prominent local figures, including Alexander, Barker, Karston, Comer M. and C. Vann Woodward, Glenn Rainey, Mary Raoul Millis, and many other members of Atlanta's liberal community, the document deplored prosecutions on the basis of political, economic, social, or religious beliefs and urged that the case be tried on the "merits of the attempt to incite insurrection in fact," rather than "far fetched interpretations of law applied to literary interpretations of other people." More than anything else, the liberals wanted no Communist martyrs; nor did they wish to see "regrettable future repression." Similarly, the ACLU sought to safeguard the rights of individuals and organizations to "conduct their propaganda without interference," which it saw as under attack in the South. Some liberals, including both ACLU informants and the Church League for Industrial Democracy, argued that the situation

reflected a social and economic environment in which "there will be a nice bloody race riot unless authorities can be persuaded to postpone the cases and then allow them to be forgotten."[14]

Equally suspicious of Communist motives were the other radicals, the struggling Socialists of Atlanta. Led by the well-intentioned but ineffectual middle-class political activist Mary Raoul Millis, Georgia's Socialist effort floundered on the rocks of an ingrained racism that blinded the party's adherents to the necessity of organizing among African Americans. While northern-born comrade Edith Washburn and her husband argued that the Atlanta local must launch an organizing drive in the black community in order to expand its base, the genteel Mary Millis and the rest of her supporters rejected this class-based strategy due to the "present state of sentiment in the South on the Negro question," as well as the "violent prejudice existing against the very name of socialism" in the state. While Millis believed that blacks were likely to be organized into the Socialist Party at some future time, any effort to do so in 1930, she thought, would be nothing short of "suicidal."[15]

In opposing any effort to mobilize African Americans in the Socialist cause, Millis granted that her friends, the Washburns, were correct in asserting that as a result, "Communism would gain headway among the Negroes." Nonetheless, she insisted, "white supremacy" was so "vital" to mainstream Georgians that any expansion of the Socialist Party base to include African Americans would mean that the party would become the "Nigger Party in the South." As a consequence, she added, there would be no whites in the ranks, which would doom the Socialists to failure. In sum, she argued that "this [was] not the moment for official action looking toward organization [of African Americans]."[16]

In response to Millis's argument, Socialist Party national executive secretary Clarence Senior maintained that it was short-sighted and unwise to "straddle too much on this issue," since Socialism was to be "sold on the basis of economics" rather than "either race prejudice or religion." To Senior, it seemed obvious that white workers in the South would have as much to gain as blacks from their organization into labor unions and the Socialist Party, an argument Millis dismissed with the assertion that union organization would be easier because it would not "suggest social intercourse."[17] With this decision, Atlanta's Socialist Party local essentially abandoned the field of radical organization among African Americans to the more aggressive and arguably more color-blind Communist Party, whose northern-born organizers worked to build a political organization on the basis of class. Meanwhile, the dwindling Socialist

contingent in the Atlanta Six defense coalition, including the earnest Mary Raoul Millis, contented itself with a respectable supporting role in the political struggle of the Depression era.

While Communists welcomed Socialist, liberal, and labor financial support, they had few illusions about the motives and intentions behind those efforts. In October 1930 *Southern Worker* preemptively claimed Communist Party primacy in the struggle to free the Atlanta Six, which it asserted was "the fight of the entire working class." Warning that this battle was an expression of the "clear class struggle policies of militant labor against unemployment . . . [and] exploitation," the journal dismissed AFL leaders as "misleaders" and "betrayers" who had been instrumental in the prosecutions. The party willfully ignored the very real restraining effect of the liberal protest, which played a significant role in persuading Georgia authorities to avoid bringing the Atlanta Six to trial. The reluctance of the officials to prosecute left the six in legal limbo, not quite free and unwilling to remain within the boundaries of the state. Meanwhile, the Communist Party's inflammatory rhetoric demonstrated Communists' determination to challenge the craft unions for leadership of the jobless in Atlanta, in the party's view, "one of the most reactionary cities in the South."[18]

Although the Communist Party distorted mainstream labor's record for political reasons, its allegations mirrored the ugly reality of racial tension exacerbated by heightened job competition in Atlanta and the surrounding area. Unease over the struggle for economic survival at the bottom of the economic ladder was evident in the industrial relations program launched by the local Urban League, an effort to better position African American workers in the labor market. Fearful that insufficient training rendered black workers "incapable of competing successfully in the changing industrial order," the League inaugurated educational programs and counseled skilled workers who had experienced discrimination within the local labor movement. Its concerns were well founded. As early as March 1930, sociologist Arthur Raper of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation documented disproportionate African American job losses in Macon and Augusta among bricklayers, carpenters, painters, plasterers, and even day laborers. Raper found that skilled blacks experienced greater unemployment and discrimination, even when unionized, and discounted wages when employed.[19]

By summer, the displacement of black workers had taken on a more menacing tone with the emergence of the "American Fascisti Association and Order of Black Shirts," an organization dedicated to the systematic replacement of black workers with unemployed whites. Arthur Raper

recalled that this organization "put real pressure on a fellow if he was employing blacks," arguing that employers had an obligation to whites "beyond what you have to the black man." Headquartered and most active in Atlanta, the "Black Shirts" rose to prominence in July 1930 with a series of well-publicized mass meetings at which African Americans were vilified and white hiring preference was endorsed. The Black Shirt movement was, in CIC observer Glenn Rainey's estimation, "simply a southern phenomenon, that the unrest, the unemployment, the bitterness and so on could so easily be exploited by racial demagogues." Like the Ku Klux Klan, the group made an urgent appeal for " 'white supremacy,' protection of the 'chastity of American women,' and replacement of Negro workers"; but it was an exaggerated vision of Communism on the march that gave them "the excuse for organization."[20] By late August, the Black Shirts claimed to have 41,451 dues-paying members on the books. Yet as historian Charles A. Martin has demonstrated, the Black Shirt phenomenon produced a display of unity among liberal organizations, religious groups, civic bodies, and the Georgia press that resulted in its rapid demise. As part of that coalition, Communist activist Nannie Washburn and her comrades "done everything they could, but that wasn't too much." Only the Atlanta Klan offered the Black Shirts limited support by stressing the importance of black subservience and linking black militancy with Communist infiltration of the African American community. Washburn confirmed the Klan connection: "that's what they all [stood] for, the black shirts and the Ku Klux."[21]

Under attack in Atlanta, the Black Shirts attempted to expand their influence in widely dispersed areas, including Griffin, Marietta, Macon, Athens, Lawrenceville, Rome, and Newnan, in all cases without notable success. In Atlanta, meanwhile, Black Shirt leaders appeared on job sites, where they attempted to intimidate hiring authorities. In one Peachtree Street demonstration, the Fascisti angrily proclaimed, "Niggers, back to the cotton fields—city jobs are for white folks." As a result, at least some job displacement occurred in the city. One Atlanta resident, Nellie Bryant, recalled that for a short time at least, they had some influence, and some black workers "were just let go or they found something wrong and fired them" for "selling liquor or hustling prostitutes."[22]

Despite its occasional exertion of such influence, however, the Black Shirt moment was brief. Actually, Ruby Baker recalled, "it was a ragtag kind of organization . . . not too well organized." Raper agreed that it was essentially a creature of the moment, "a flash in the pan." Harassed legally and widely criticized, the Fascisti entered a period of rapid decline in late 1930 as liberal middle-class opinion asserted itself. By 1931, the

mayors of Atlanta, Athens, Newnan, and other cities had denied the Black Shirts parade permits, meeting space, and literature distribution privileges. Moreover, community leaders recoiled against the coarse brutality of the organization's appeal to the unemployed working class, resulting in a drive by journalists, clergy, and editors to discredit it in the public eye. The thinly veiled threat of class militancy that underlay this group appears to have deeply offended the sober second sense of the community. So rapid was its dissolution that liberal bellwether Will Alexander could conclude in October that the organization had "collapsed beyond the hope of any successful revival"; moreover, its decisive failure led him "to hope that no movement of that sort will ever again succeed in the South." The optimism was unwarranted in view of the deep economic crisis and embedded racism that had nourished the growth of the Fascisti. More realistic was the Atlanta Urban League's Charles Washington, who in late August reminded his national office that the Black Shirt organizers had touched a nerve by "taking advantage of the present unemployment situation to capitalize on race prejudice." Neither economic distress nor racism had magically disappeared; if anything, the deepening Depression ensured ongoing competition for sharply limited employment opportunity. In an accurate analysis of future possibilities, *New Republic* correspondent Edwin Tribble observed that the Black Shirt "touches the lean pocketbook of the white and lays the cause of his unemployment directly at the door of the Negro."[23]

The Black Shirt movement provided Communists with an effective organizing tool that resonated with their African American base in Georgia. Party publications attempted to establish linkage among unemployed activism, the Atlanta Six prosecutions, and the alleged function of the Black Shirts as an instrument of management and officialdom in an interrelated war against workers. Public authorities were portrayed as ready to crush industrial unionism and unemployed activism beneath the heel of capitalism, in cooperation with a collaborationist AFL. In this view of the workers' world, adversity would breed defiance, which would translate into organizational gains for the party; and by some estimates, Communism was growing, at least within the impoverished Atlanta black community. In November 1930, black informant R. C. Miller, who had been expelled from the Communist Party, told a congressional investigating committee that the radical movement was "on the increase," while Steve Nance of the Atlanta Federation of Trades acknowledged that Communists were "showing some activity" in Rome, Columbus, and Augusta. Confirming these reports, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation worried about party inroads among working-class whites. While the commission

thought it unlikely that such radical "preaching" would persuade black workers, who were "conservative and patient," it warned that Communist doctrines would have a deleterious effect on "the mass of under-privileged whites" who were "obsessed with a sense of economic and social competition with Negroes." Less concerned about organized workers, Nance insisted that though party organizers worked through their own "revolutionary unions" (a reference to the Trade Union Unity League, or TUUL), in Atlanta and Georgia they would "not have a chance."[24]

Despite Nance's bravado, Atlanta Federation of Trades leaders were only too conscious of the challenge presented by the deepening job crisis in Georgia, particularly after the *Southern Worker* raised the ante by publicizing the Communist Party's proposed Workers Social Insurance Bill to create a nationwide unemployment insurance program. Downplaying the "many prosperity programs and panaceas" that had been offered, the *Atlanta Journal of Labor* called for an adequate and universal "year round" wage scale. Meanwhile, the Atlanta Better Business Commission, on which Steve Nance played an active role, urged local employers to "employ Atlanta people first" in preference to "floaters" or transients. Then, to demonstrate its concern for Depression victims, the local labor federation voted in December 1930 to ask employed members to contribute one day's pay to its relief fund, which would be distributed to unemployed union members.[25]

Georgia labor's initial response to unemployment reflected the tardiness of the American Federation of Labor in endorsing social insurance measures. AFL president William Green and the Executive Council were slow to embrace unemployment insurance, partly due to their distaste for the British experience with the "dole," which, it contended, had left the British unemployment fund "insolvent" while "demoralizing" the people. While the Federation was giving the concept "very serious thought and study," it was not yet convinced that unemployment compensation was the solution to the American economic problem. While Green and the council deliberated, unionists in Georgia began to lose patience with the AFL's dilatory behavior. Finally, in April 1931, the Georgia Federation of Labor broke ranks with Green to endorse state and federal legislation to mandate unemployment insurance. This action mirrored rising concerns over Communist inroads based on the party's social insurance proposals, which, according to Georgia-born party activist Hosea Hudson, who organized in both Georgia and Alabama, were "of particular appeal to the poor black community." The *Augusta Labor Review* pointedly noted that "behind every revolution is a deep-seated cause" and a "long series of grievances." To condemn Communists without addressing the causes

that nourished Communism was "like covering an ulcer with talcum powder."[26]

The ugliest manifestation of the underlying disease was certainly widespread joblessness, which had become the key Communist organizing issue in Atlanta by early 1931. In January the District 17 Buro, which exercised party authority in both Alabama and Georgia, reached consensus on the importance of broad-based struggle against evictions and increased efforts to build Unemployed Councils as mass organizations. Local party activists were convinced, perhaps mistakenly, that "unemployment [had] decidedly more of a mass character in the South than in the North." With "so great a proportion of the masses living below the subsistence level," it seemed that southern workers experienced "pauperism" to a far greater extent than the workers of the North. On the front lines in Atlanta, one group of jobless tenants urged that struggling workers organize to resist evictions. Another jobless worker complained that despite management talk of building roads, "all they have given us is talk," an obvious dodge that meant that the "employed and unemployed have got to get together to force relief for "the unemployed who are starving and have no clothes." And in February 1931, when jobless veterans attempted to hold an integrated hunger march in Atlanta, the demonstration was derailed after a parade permit was withdrawn, but not before the frustrated protestors promised to "stick together" the next time the marchers met. Not long thereafter, protesting layoffs at Fulton Bag, Atlanta Woolen, Exposition Mill, and the Southern Railway, the Communist-led Atlanta Unemployed Council ridiculed Red Cross, Family Welfare, and Community Kitchen relief efforts as part of a government-capitalist "starvation system." The organization urged the establishment of additional neighborhood councils to demand cash relief, a rent moratorium, and a utilities holiday for the jobless, as well as an end to the "chain gang" labor system on public works projects. To advance these goals, in February 1931 the Unemployed Council followed up with a petition campaign to force the unemployment question before the Atlanta City Council and mayor.[27]

As radical agitation accelerated and the unemployment crisis worsened, middle-class organizations worked to undercut the Communist appeal to the jobless. Once both Community Chest and Family Welfare resources proved unequal to the demand created by widespread destitution in the black community, the well-established Neighborhood Union created the Westside Unemployment Relief Committee to fill the vacuum. Determined to "not only help the unemployed today" but also "to hold the family together that they may retain their respectability," the committee

strove to reach the needy "before they actually [got] into the breadline." Its efforts evidenced the effective work of Atlanta's black middle class in assuming responsibility for the welfare of the city's struggling African American workers. As Karen Ferguson has demonstrated, the Neighborhood Union's efforts represented the strong effort of the west-side community to help its own people maintain a semblance of self-reliance; while the Union was a testament to the efficacy of private, middle-class relief work, the unprecedented scope of the Depression crisis swamped its resources. By 1932, the unemployment problem had grown more urgent, resulting in the establishment of a citywide Unemployment Committee, which was to absorb the workers and resources of the path-breaking Neighborhood Union committee.[28]

Side by side with the Neighborhood Union, the Atlanta Urban League moved in 1931 and 1932 to confront the relief crisis with its own Emergency Relief Committee, which operated a relief kitchen that served nearly 60,000 meals to the needy. In addition the League assumed a leadership role in the creation of the citywide Committee on Unemployed Relief, the analogue to President Hoover's POUR. These efforts complemented the Atlanta League's active efforts to fight the displacement of African American workers, which, though not always successful, played a role in the group's work toward "the prevention of an unpleasant inter-racial situation."[29] By late 1931, however, the Atlanta jobless were more in need of concrete aid than committee coordination of the welfare delivery system.

Apparently oblivious to the critical need for relief assistance, Georgia welfare authorities contended that the situation was under control. In October 1931, Georgia welfare official Alice E. Stenholm reported to POUR that, while no systematic survey of joblessness had been made, the situation was stable and had not required legislative action on relief. In Atlanta, she noted, private businesses were developing a plan to share the work, and the Community Chest was in the midst of its massive fund drive for relief, while in hard-hit Columbus, wage adjustments and deferred rentals on company property had been implemented. Stenholm concluded that despite a major transient problem and heavy pressure in Atlanta, Georgia would "be able to meet its responsibility without help from the state" and that it was "not necessary to send in an organizer." Coca-Cola executive R. W. Woodruff of Atlanta, POUR state representative, agreed that federal officials should "not stir up things too much in Georgia," and that there was no need for "more than a skeleton organization." Although he counseled against heavy-handed intervention, Woodruff privately recommended that the federal government create an

emergency reconstruction corporation in order to "establish confidence." At this time, POUR's Thad Holt reported to Washington that Rome, Augusta, Columbus, and Atlanta were all "well organized" and that Russell, Woodruff, state welfare secretary James P. Faulkner, and Georgia business leaders had developed a "plan for handling the situation."[30] These plans invariably emphasized a combination of private charity, business paternalism, religious initiative, and self-help schemes, all designed to obviate the need for significant public expenditures at the state and local levels. Despite the spirit of boosterism among the elite, pressure from below was building. In January 1932, for example, Frank Miller of the Atlanta Community Chest sent Woodruff a confidential letter expressing alarm over the urgent demands being made on his agency. Noting that some applicants were threatening to "assemble their neighbors" for a "spectacular demonstration," Miller sought to "prevent the spirit of riot manifesting itself." Indeed, the scourge of unemployment could have a transformational impact on the worldview of its victims, as in the case of a laid-off Pinkerton detective who in November 1931 turned against the "labor crushers" he had served to do some "agitating" on his own. He told Dr. Rice Christie of the Ponce de Leon Baptist Church that his experience had made him a "full grown Communist."[31]

Given the widespread denial among the Georgia elite, the Communist Party saw an opening; yet party activists struggled to take advantage of the opportunity, partly due to the obstacles presented by deep-seated racial divisions and official repression, but in some measure because of leadership failures and limited financial resources. A frank discussion in the party's Atlanta Section Committee revealed that by late 1932 the Communist Party was in disarray, with only one functioning party unit in operation. Comrade Angelo Herndon, recently arrived from Alabama, observed that no unemployed groups were then active, membership had declined, and mass organization work had faltered. These failures he attributed to uninspired leadership by the incompetent party organizer Otto Hall, who had allegedly avoided meetings, pocketed party funds, and wasted scarce resources. An early African American party member, Hall had accepted the Atlanta assignment in full knowledge of the challenges he faced in Georgia; despite the critics, he was a seasoned veteran who enjoyed the confidence of most national party leaders. Because of Hall's "irresponsibility," Herndon argued, local members had become "demoralized"; some southern party leaders argued, therefore, that the only solution was his removal from Atlanta organizational work, which eventually occurred.[32]

Hall's transgressions, however, were the symptom rather than the cause of the party's malady. More damaging was the ongoing problem of building an effective biracial movement in an area unreceptive to such collaboration. As early as April 1931 district organizer Tom Johnson forcefully argued in a letter to Earl Browder that the battle for black self-determination must take precedence and that equal rights for African Americans was the "burning political issue in the South." In Johnson's view, it was also important that the revolutionary struggle encompass the development of "permanent organizational forms to embrace the united front." He envisioned the creation of a Communist-led "fighting organization of Negro and white workers" that would "embrace all elements of this united front." In the South, the Communist Party's League of Struggle for Negro Rights was best suited to carry out this function. Finally, Johnson was "absolutely opposed" to the establishment of separate black and white organizations, which, he insisted, would force Communists to "compromise [themselves] in the eyes of the Negro masses."[33]

Much to the dismay of southern liberals, the rhetoric and reality of the Communist appeal resulted in significant inroads in the African American community. Jessie Daniel Ames of the CIC lamented the divisions created by the Communist presence in the South, which meant that for many whites, "the Negro and Communism frequently [became] one and the same." More to the point, Howard Kester of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) observed that due to devastating unemployment, job displacement, and wage discrimination, the economic status of the black population had declined to its lowest level since emancipation. This trend, together with the advent of a Communist presence in the lower South, had exerted a dramatic influence on African American political and social attitudes. Kester, who retained ties with at least a few party members, noted that in a region in which "Communism was a relatively unknown term among most Negroes," the party had succeeded in "reaching, through direct and indirect means, large numbers of them." Because Communists were "winning adherents everywhere," he warned FOR members to be "as 'crazy' for [their] cause as the Communists [were] for theirs."[34]

The situation was volatile, and the Communist Party understood the opportunity created by the crisis of capitalism. National party directives called upon district organizers to concentrate on unemployed hearings and demonstrations in African American neighborhoods, utilization of the Scottsboro prosecutions, promotion of black participation in the national hunger march of November 1931, and the creation of integrated united front committees of industrial and agricultural workers to demand

relief. The party Central Committee (CC) in New York took special pains to urge southern comrades to combat "Negro oppression"; following the Thirteenth Party Plenum, the CC Negro Department made African American work on the "unemployment campaign" its first priority, with emphasis on the fight against evictions, the battle for cash relief, and the problem of discrimination in unemployment programs.[35]

Clearly the most effective leader on the local scene was the young Communist activist Angelo Herndon, who, after jumping bail in Birmingham, set about the task of organizing the unemployed in Fulton County. Herndon's appearance in Atlanta coincided with the revitalization of the city's faltering unemployed movement. His formal duties were to disseminate information on the party, educate prospective members, expand the party base, and develop a functioning organization. Before long, Herndon's talents as leader of the unemployed and worker educator led to enlargement of the party membership; equally important was his informed analysis of the situation confronted by party activists and worker advocates in Atlanta. Almost immediately, he began to plead with Communist district leaders for a white organizer who could more effectively cement the interracial tie that the party sought to build. Charging his co-worker Max Weitzman with incompetence compounded by laziness, he asked for a more effective comrade who could establish the white connections that discrimination prevented him from making. Not only was Herndon a keen judge of talent, but he also helped white workers to understand the need for interracial cooperation on economic issues. Long-time radical activist Nannie Leah Washburn later recalled that even after he was jailed under the insurrection law, he was organizing and teaching prisoners in Fulton Towers, activities that prison officials failed to appreciate.[36]

To Herndon, the laborious process of building an unemployed movement in Atlanta began with a concerted effort to gain the confidence of both white and black workers. After an initial open-air mass meeting, a citywide Unemployment Committee began the organization of Unemployed Councils "block by block, street by street, and section by section." The Communist-led Councils took the lead in assembling the Atlanta Bonus March delegation, harassed and embarrassed county and federal relief officials at every turn, fought against local efforts to launch a back-to-the-farm movement, and served as general ombudsmen for the destitute. Herndon observed that these tactics meant that the Councils and officials were "deadlocked practically all of the time."[37]

Tensions finally boiled over in June 1932 when the Fulton County Commission slashed relief expenditures by one-third and prepared to

close down Atlanta's emergency relief center, while refusing to endorse a tax increase to support more generous relief payments. During debate over the tax increase, Commissioner Walter C. Hendrix insisted that there was "no army of gaunt, suffering people in [Atlanta]" and challenged critics to bring forward any evidence of hunger and starvation. His words enraged unemployed activists, including Herndon, who was convinced that closure of relief stations was a scheme to force the jobless to return to the country to work at slave wages.[38] Nannie Washburn argued "that was the big cry" to "come to the commissioner's office," and "we all went." The relief crisis and the commission's response jolted the Unemployed Councils into action that was destined to change the dynamics of unemployed activism in Atlanta and elevate the visibility of the Communist Party in the city and nation.

At first, it seemed that protest could be contained, as evidenced by an orderly presentation on June 29 of a petition for food or relief by some fifty unemployed mill workers, who indicated they could have brought five hundred but thought that their action "would be enough to prove [their] point" to the commissioners. Meanwhile, the Atlanta Unemployed Council blanketed the city with leaflets urging "all starving people" to come before the commission to assure the body that the relief program could not safely be curtailed. Working secretly at night, the Council went house to house to publicize the demonstration planned for the following day. Even Herndon was surprised at the turnout of one thousand demonstrators, a thoroughly integrated crowd bent on convincing Commissioner Hendrix that there was "plenty of suffering in the city of Atlanta" and an indisputable need for an ongoing relief program. The fiery Nannie Leah Washburn remembered an event with "many, many black people," a popular rising significant for its success in forging an interracial link, a bond that revealed that "the blacks was just like us poor whites." For blacks, she noted, it was "the first coming out in the open, you know, the blacks to organize unemployed."[39]

A shocked and confused Fulton County Commission equivocated and then approved an emergency relief appropriation of $6,000 to meet the needs of families cut off by the original slash in funding. Herndon's friend from Birmingham organizing days, Communist activist Hosea Hudson, remembered the event as a "big victory" for the Georgia Communist Party. Among those most alarmed by the demonstration and the reaction were white officials in Atlanta, who were shaken by the specter of poor whites cooperating with African Americans to make demands on the power structure that had oppressed both. No less threatening was the reality of radical leadership in a genuine mass action, which further

aroused the militantly anticommunist business and political leaders of the city. This anxiety was only exacerbated by the scope of the demonstrators' demands: release of imprisoned vagrants, guaranteed income for the jobless, an end to discrimination in relief, a shift to cash relief, fuel assistance, and further aid to the children of the unemployed. Hostility to radicalism and fears of interracial working-class unity fueled a rising paranoia that spelled trouble for Herndon, who was widely believed to have been the "motivating power behind the recent demonstration of black and white unemployed."[40]

While local elites fumed over the unlikely turn of events, Communist organizers saw a glimmer of hope for the party's future in Georgia. Newly arrived ILD organizer Clarina Michelson grumbled about the role played by a white preacher and a "Socialist Party dame" but told her New York comrades that "these unemployed demonstrations [were] the best bet to break through the terror" in the South. She also noted that after the commission demonstration, a follow-up leaflet had been disseminated, a local Unemployed Committee of four members elected, and plans launched for another such event. The handout reminded Atlanta workers that the June 30 demonstration had succeeded because hundreds of African American and white workers had made common cause and prevailed by "showing the bosses that [they would] not starve peacefully." The Atlanta Unemployed Committee maintained that the "biggest surprise handed the bosses" was the image of black and white workers who "came down together to fight for relief." The committee saw that segregation prevented solidarity, which was "why they work[ed] so hard to separate us." Promising a follow-up meeting to adopt new demands, the newly empowered organizers of the unemployed insisted that "there [was] no reason for any worker to starve in the midst of plenty."[41]

For a brief moment, it seemed that the pressures exerted by a failed economy had induced southern workers to unite against the social forces that kept them apart. Birmingham activist Hosea Hudson remembered that "everybody was enthusiastic, congratulating the Atlantans for their success." Conscious of the reality that the South's working class was "like a house that's divided against itself," the sophisticated Angelo Herndon was acutely aware of the "alarm and consternation" aroused by the unprecedented "spectacle" at the Atlanta courthouse on June 30. This new visibility soon led to trouble for the jobless and the budding protest movement. On July 11, close monitoring of the Unemployed Committee's post office box brought results with the arrest of Herndon as he retrieved his mail. In Washburn's words, when Herndon "got in there to the mailbox," the police "grabbed him and arrested him," after which they tried

him "for insurrection, trying to overthrow the government." Atlanta officials moved quickly to reassert their authority, initially charging Herndon with "suspicion," which in this case was a poorly concealed code word for "Communist." Not until July 22 was the young organizer formally indicted for attempting to incite insurrection and circulate insurrectionary literature, thus linking his future with the cases of the Atlanta Six, whose fate was yet to be determined. Assistant prosecutor John Hudson also announced that Herndon had been "holding meetings over the city and making speeches, organizing the Communist Party, and soliciting memberships in the party for the overthrow of the government." The *Washington Tribune* observed that "the real reason for Herndon's arrest was his growing influence among the Negro unemployed in Atlanta" and the "growing militancy of Negro and white workers and the unity developing out of their increasing resistance." To Communist organizer Joan Barbour, the "fact that Negro and white workers went down together, are organized together," was "enough reason for the authorities to try to smash the [unemployed] organization." She reported to Don Burke of the ILD and Communist Party district organizer Nat Ross that the Atlanta comrades intended to connect with local unemployed struggles by treating the Herndon case as "an attack on the unemployed workers, unemployed committees."[42]

Herndon's imprisonment made him an important symbol for many working class African Americans, who saw him as a heroic figure. As Georgina Hickey has shown, some poor black workers viewed the case as symptomatic of "the racial hatred they had felt for years." Hosea Hudson, Georgia native and Birmingham Communist Party organizer, later emphasized the importance of the interracial united front created by the demonstration, which had proved that there was "nothing that was impossible for the working class to master once they [were] organized." At the time, party leaders were quick to see the wider significance of the events in Atlanta. In a comment on the widespread working-class anger generated by the case, Communist organizer Harry Jackson reported "widespread indignation" in the black community, Socialist Party circles, AFL unions, and the Atlanta liberal community. He argued that the police blunder had created "an extremely favorable situation for the building of a tremendous organized mass defense movement around the Herndon case," an opening that promised to revitalize the Communist effort in Atlanta. Jackson noted that Herndon had just begun to reverse the "deplorable state" of the party by strengthening the unemployed movement; ironically, since the Herndon arrest, "the objective possibilities [had] tremendously improved." At a local buro meeting on the Herndon case, the

potential for the creation of a united front in Georgia was confirmed by the presence of noncommunist workers and Socialists, who were prepared to organize a broad-based defense committee. Jackson's report confirmed the Communist Party's "estimation of the situation," which stressed the "tremendous possibilities for the movement."[43]

Local activists also grasped the usefulness of the Herndon case for the developing unemployed movement. The experienced Comrade Otto Hall, still present in Georgia despite a lackluster record, urged that the free speech and assembly question be integrated with the "unemployment fight" in Atlanta. He pledged to "make the right for unemployed workers to organize and for relief a big issue," which was certain to "get lots of support" that would allow the party to "break through legally." Other imported activists were on the same page, in that they proceeded to "line [Herndon] up with the unemployed struggle" and the "attack on unemployed workers." Chiding the ILD for dilatory behavior in arranging legal counsel, national organizer Clarina Michelson stressed the importance of the recent "attack on the unemployed of Atlanta" and the need to "jack up" the ILD in order to get "a real campaign started immediately."[44]

Michelson's emphasis on the jobless was evident in her persistent efforts to broaden the coalition through an appeal to Socialists and AFL unionists. After her appearance at a Socialist Party local meeting, one Socialist agreed to take a resolution to the floor of an upcoming Federated Trades' Council meeting. Michelson assumed that the resolution would pass if clearly linked to the attack on Atlanta's unemployed workers. Thus, it contained a protest of "this attack on the leadership of the unemployed and on their right to organize, uniting white and black," as well as a demand for Herndon's immediate release. Eventually, AFL became part of the broad liberal-radical coalition in support of Angelo Herndon.[45]

As the rhetoric over the Herndon case heated up during the fall presidential campaign, Communists labored to build the unemployed movement as a bridge to expanded party membership and influence. The party's internal correspondence reveals a determination to combine "small struggles of unemployed in the blocks" with "broader struggles around the Herndon case" to build a "mass ILD in Georgia." In August 1932 District Organizer Nat Ross reported to the secretariat a "small unemployed movement" and a few ILD branches in Atlanta. Among the Georgia comrades' short list of "outstanding achievements" was the "development of mass unemployed work" in spite of great obstacles. Ross was optimistic over progress in the promotion of racial unity, which was reflected in an Atlanta membership that he claimed was 50 percent white. While he

may have exaggerated the interracial unity, there is evidence of growing white interest in the party. In 1932, for example, African American Clarence Bacote attended Communist meetings with a friend, primarily because they "wanted to learn"; to their surprise, the first thing they learned was that they "were the only blacks there, the rest were whites." Nannie Washburn also remembered growth in Communist Party membership at this time, including her family's attendance at mass rallies and involvement in leaflet distribution "to get more people organized." The Unemployed Committee of Atlanta continued the effort to mobilize a mass movement, but the committee's chronic cash shortage limited its ability to lobby for relief and the release of Angelo Herndon. As Charles Martin has observed, the unemployment problem was the most frequent topic at party meetings at a time when Atlanta Communists seemed focused on decidedly "non-revolutionary issues."[46]

Activism on behalf of Angelo Herndon notwithstanding, much of organizer Clarina Michelson's time during the summer of 1932 was devoted to the grinding detail of organizing the party's Ford-Foster presidential campaign. Beyond Fulton County, the prospects were modest at best, though twenty counties were represented on the party's contact list. Among the party's candidates were the dependable Francis Leathers, Annie Mae Leathers, and Nannie Leah Washburn, as well as gubernatorial candidate William M. McClellan. All were from Atlanta, except for a lone presidential elector, H. V. Haranis, a resident of Rabun County in the north Georgia mountains. Although most candidates were native whites, in reality the vast majority of Communist contacts and supporters were found in the African American community. The *Atlanta Daily World* attributed this strength to the fearlessness and belligerence of the Communists, who were as "persistent and bold in their demands and propaganda as any minority group has ever been."[47]

By late 1932, however, the internal problems of the Communist Party in Georgia were evident. Herndon defense attorney Benjamin Davis Jr. told the ILD's William Patterson that the "general status of the party and the Defense organization [was] very unsatisfactory." He saw no significant gains since the peak reached at the June relief demonstration, a failure that he linked with Herndon's incarceration. Davis asserted that Herndon had been the "backbone, nucleus, and active spirit behind the work" in Atlanta. He regretted that a man of such high reputation languished in jail "while his structures crumble[d] about him." Nat Ross agreed that the situation in Georgia was "no good" despite a "splendid" opportunity for growth, including "wonderful possibilities in Atlanta, Savannah, Augusta, etc."[48] Their concerns were not without some justification, but it

is equally true that their assertions were influenced by a sense of urgency over the need for greater external support for their activities.

The party's problems in Georgia resulted in a search for explanations, which eventually came to focus on the failings of the ineffective Otto Hall as Atlanta section leader. Hall's longevity in Atlanta may be explained in terms of his close connections with national party leaders and experience in the field, as well as his willingness to accept a challenging assignment with little party financial support. While Davis acknowledged the handicap imposed on the Atlanta comrades by the shortage of cash, he ultimately concluded that the "responsibility must be laid at [Hall's] door." More brutal in his assessment, Ross branded Hall "a total failure" and implored the secretariat to send Georgia "a capable comrade." Deeply engrossed in planning for the National Hunger March in November 1932, Ross noted that only five marchers were expected from Atlanta, despite "growing interest everywhere." Worried that "things [didn't] look good," he could only promise to "raise hell with Otto to pep things up." If Atlanta failed to provide support for this important unemployed demonstration, Ross asserted, it would be a "damn shame" since so many local comrades and sympathetic contributors were ready to "do anything to put the movement across in Atlanta."[49]

The comrades were doomed to disappointment, still reeling as they were from the Herndon prosecution and Hall's mismanagement. Organizers had assumed that the December march would "stimulate all of [their] work in the South, particularly the unemployed and agrarian work," but by October, it was clear that "Atlanta [was] in bad shape." Georgia's twenty delegates fell short of the Unemployed Council's goal of "rallying the unemployed masses" for the struggle in Washington, D.C. Estimates of the national turnout ranged from 3,000 to 7,000, but it is clear that Georgia counted for little in bringing about the march's limited successes. Its main contribution was to add to the event's diversity with a racially integrated delegation, highlighted by the flair of a "Georgia Negro in a rainbow colored beret, with scarf to match [who] stepped jauntily to the martial music of the 'Internationale.'"[50]

The hunger march was fascinating political theater, which had been deftly linked with the unemployed movement's growth, but by January 1933 most Georgians were more narrowly focused on the state's hobbled economy and the fate of the unfortunate Angelo Herndon. As a new government began to take shape in Washington, Georgia's "poor and oppressed" continued to face day-to-day privation that cried out for an early remedy. Confronted by dire hardship, the Georgia unemployed fixed their attentions on the plight of Angelo Herndon and his dramatic

battle against Georgia's oppressive legal system. Herndon had become a symbol of defiant resistance for the suffering masses, particularly African Americans who endured not only institutionalized racism but also grinding poverty that crushed the human spirit. By late 1932, an Urban League analysis revealed that in Atlanta alone there were 11,000 unemployed workers receiving public relief, approximately 50 percent of them African Americans formerly employed as day laborers, as domestics, or in the building trades.[51] It was the ongoing struggle of these workers that sustained and motivated Georgia Communists in spite of their previous difficulties.

When the Herndon case was tried in January 1933, it drew widespread attention in Georgia and the nation. The complicated story of Herndon's trial, imprisonment, persecution, and appeals has been well told in other places and need not be repeated here. Charles H. Martin has definitively described those events and analyzed their significance, particularly from a legal and constitutional view. Suffice it to say that the Unemployed Councils, the International Labor Defense, and a broad liberal-radical coalition joined in a vigorous effort to defend and free a political prisoner. They were finally to succeed after two appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court, whose verdict prompted the state of Georgia to drop its insurrection case against the Atlanta Six.[52]

From the beginning, the Herndon defense attracted a variety of supporters, including both the national and the southern press. In Georgia, support for Herndon was thinner but did include the black-owned *Atlanta Daily World* and the white-owned *Macon Telegraph*, which rejected the initial guilty verdict by chastising those who "stupidly use our courts" to persecute African Americans and chase Communist phantoms. The *Telegraph* pointedly reminded readers that "the ultimate purpose of Communism is to provide enough food and clothes and shelter for oppressed people," while the *World* added the observation that Communist parades and demonstrations revealed that "no country is immune to chaos when its economic system breaks down." By summer the voice of black Atlanta was ready to support an "Angelo Herndon Day" event planned and executed by the city's African American clergy, who were an integral element in the defense coalition.[53]

The Angelo Herndon–Atlanta Six Defense Committee, based in Atlanta, presented a united front that included the Negro Chamber of Commerce, churches, labor, college faculty, educators, black businessmen, shop owners, Jewish organizations, Socialists, and the ILD. Nannie Washburn recalled a diverse coalition, including African American support that was "plenty good," but emphasized the ILD as "the main

leaders" in the legal defense. And while she acknowledged grudging middle-class backers, she insisted that the black middle class "wouldn't belong with the group I'm in. See, I'm the grassroots." Created in late January 1933, the Provisional Defense Committee used the "united front from below" tactic to build broad support for Herndon, especially in the black community and among church leaders.[54]

By May, however, tensions within the committee surfaced, as the divided Socialist contingent grew uneasy with the obvious and prominent role played by Communists in the Herndon defense. The small Atlanta Socialist Party local was primarily petit bourgeois in composition, though a negligible "proletarian" element could be found in its ranks. A leading figure in the Socialist Party, Mary Raoul Millis, soon recognized that the ILD and Communist Party were the "active force" in the defense, which prompted her dramatic resignation as committee chair at a large public meeting on May 7. Atlanta Communists regarded Millis as "a particular enemy of the Negroes," who had "done her best to disrupt the communists" once she came to understand their strength in the coalition supporting Herndon. Confronted by her unanticipated resignation, the young scholar C. Vann Woodward found himself in charge of a disrupted meeting, which ended in the selection of an equally youthful white preacher and labor activist, Donald L. West, to serve as temporary local chairman of the organization.[55]

Don West, a native of north Georgia, had participated in the founding of the Highlander Folk School at Monteagle, Tennessee, and recently returned to Georgia, where he hoped to establish an outreach educational institution. Deeply committed to the Social Gospel, West had also served as Tennessee Socialist Party state organizer and briefly as state secretary of the Georgia Socialist Party; but by May 1933, he was moving rapidly toward the Communist Party. Impressed by the "militancy of the CP, the Scottsboro policy, and the party stand on the Negro question," West informed Nat Ross that he planned to join the Communist Party and explore the possibility of "holding a joint school." By June 1934 Comrade West functioned as Atlanta section organizer, thus providing the party with a desperately needed native southern white advocate. Since the Communist Party "function[ed] illegally in Atlanta," however, he found himself under constant surveillance as he worked to build the united front in support of Herndon. He found his only refuge within the black community, though some of Atlanta's small Jewish merchants provided clandestine support of Herndon and sometimes the party. As chair and office manager for the defense committee, West was soon to become a fugitive during the Atlanta Red Scare of 1934, when John Hudson swore out a

warrant for his arrest under the insurrection act. Harbored by friends in the Atlanta black community, West found work on the Herndon defense increasingly dangerous and finally escaped to New York in July 1934 concealed in the back seat of Ben Davis's car after several close calls with the Atlanta authorities. Having executed this "fadeaway," he remained active in the Herndon defense from a distance until the party reassigned him to work on labor organizing in North Carolina.[56]

While participation in the Herndon defense exposed radicals to police scrutiny, it also provided an opening for renewed organizational activity among the unemployed. For Communists especially, Herndon's persecution at the hands of the authorities confirmed their initial analysis of his imprisonment as a direct assault on the jobless. In January a newly organized Atlanta branch of ILD vowed to "carry on the fight of the Unemployed Councils" while "condemning the Herndon frame-up." Because the "situation [was] very favorable," the group thought it important that Atlanta be organized as a separate district and that the troublesome Otto Hall be removed from the city and replaced by a "capable comrade" to take advantage of the "sentiment in the Herndon case."[57]

Under increased pressure, Hall responded to the criticism with the argument that the Herndon arrest and the acceleration of the "terror," which had caught the party "napping," had damaged the promising unemployed movement. Admitting that after the June demonstration local activists had grown "overconfident" and tended to "rest on [their] laurels," Hall argued weakly that he had been "left alone to carry on the work" and that some meetings "could not be taken care of." Denying the accusation that he had "squandered money," the embattled organizer charged the party with nonsupport and justified his accumulation of debts as a consequence. He then admitted that party units were "not functioning well" and that he was lax on "routine work," but insisted he had "carried out instructions." Moreover, he reminded party authorities that he had volunteered to work in Georgia "knowing what kind of state it is." As a result of the accumulated criticisms, Hall was finally eased out of work in Atlanta in 1933.[58]

After Hall's departure, unemployed organizing was left in the hands of a local party member, with sporadic assistance from the district organizer, Nat Ross. Ross complained to the secretariat in New York that the "great support of the Herndon campaign" and the promise of a "real organized united front movement around Herndon" was being squandered due to the absence of a full-time party organizer in Atlanta. Symptomatic of the party's problem in Atlanta was the frank declaration in November 1933 that an active pressure group was needed, but that organizers "cannot

call them unemployed councils because they are known as communist organizations among the workers" and it was unwise to "scare the workers with a name." The goals and methods did not change: pressure for unemployment insurance, relief demonstrations, eviction protests, and advocacy of adequate government programs. Strong organization was essential, but talk of revolution was to be downplayed. Activists could "[lead] up to the race question and the Communist Party" but were not to "rush things" or "make the worker suspicious." Indeed, it seemed necessary to organize separate black and white unemployed organizations that could later become "united fronts" and engage in "joint action." This approach was advanced as a "great step in smashing race prejudice in the South." Communists now concluded that they could not "expose themselves" yet must not "hide [themselves] so well that [they were] not effective in doing work."[59] In addressing the race question and advocacy of revolution, the party had been forced into a more pragmatic stance in large measure due to state suppression of radicalism.

As the Communist Party was driven underground, the NAACP watched nervously. Assistant Secretary Roy Wilkins in New York expressed concern over the "various Communist uproars in the South." Likewise, the organization's Atlanta leadership was fully aware of the growing sympathy for Communists as a result of the Angelo Herndon–Atlanta Six prosecutions. Daisy Lampkin, writing from Atlanta, told Wilkins that the Herndon case had "stirred up more racial discord than anything else" but that there was "great admiration expressed for [ILD defense attorneys] Geer and Davis in the courage displayed." Nonetheless, she cited the reservations of "sensible Negroes" in Georgia who believed that African Americans "cannot afford to line up with the Communists as communism will never succeed in Georgia." Lampkin feared that African Americans would be "frozen out in the business world" and "lose everything." Her remarks reflected a legitimate concern that the reality of radical inroads in the black community endangered the quiet advances made in race relations as well as economic improvements painstakingly won by an upwardly mobile middle class in the pre-Depression years. Ignoring widespread African American sympathy for Herndon's radical advocates, which was especially strong in the working-class community, she asserted that as a result of the case, "intelligent blacks" expressed a "more favorable attitude" toward NAACP than in the previous year. In agreement with the NAACP analysis, CIC's Will Alexander wrote that his organization was "very well satisfied" with the effort to curb Communist inroads among southern African Americans. The pragmatic Alexander

argued that as long as the party seemed to be "losing influence among Negroes" it was "better not to oppose them in any way."[60]

The exchange between NAACP leaders revealed the distance between the association and the impoverished African American masses, some of whom had turned to Communists for leadership in their hour of need. The struggle over the Herndon case demonstrated that in the early years of the Great Depression, desperate people in urban Georgia participated in mass action that called attention to unmet human needs and demanded a government response that might help them cope with the consequences of a collapsed economy. The Georgia unemployed movement reveals a symbiotic relationship between local activists and northern organizers who helped bring structure and order to the mass protests of the early 1930s. Consistent with the new history of American Communism, this analysis demonstrates that there were local initiatives and overriding local issues behind the popular acceptance of radical leadership in the Atlanta unemployed movement. Yet it is equally clear that imported Communist Party activists, particularly the dynamic Angelo Herndon, were crucial catalysts in the creation of organizations through which the underclass protested against an unresponsive social and political system.

As a byproduct of the party's engagement in the struggle of the unemployed, Atlanta's white elite encountered an element in the African American community that questioned the timeworn social traditions of the South and forced an early confrontation with a new, more militant concept of interracial relations. Collaborating with oppressed whites, working-class blacks made demands on Atlanta's political leaders that revealed remarkable agency on the part of people once thought powerless. The implications of the new model were clear to adherents of the old order, who brutally suppressed those who advanced an alternative approach to the race question. The message and its carriers were not welcomed in Depression Georgia, but the principle of interracial collaboration in the cause of social justice was destined to reappear during the next generation of reform.

The decline of the Unemployed Councils in Georgia after 1933 mirrored a trend that was evident in other geographic sections of the United States. As was true nationwide, the predominantly Communist phase of the unemployed movement was nearing an end. By 1934, the Trotskyist National Unemployed League and the Socialist Workers Alliance were emerging as alternative organizations that competed vigorously for the allegiance of the unemployed. In Georgia as elsewhere, the Communist label contributed to the marginalization of the Councils as the Depression wore on. Finally, in 1936 the Popular Front policies of the Communist

Party and the strength of the alternative organizations resulted in the national meeting that unified the nationwide unemployed movement behind a new expanded Workers Alliance of America. While the Alliance expressed a new policy of cooperation among radical groups, its roots may be traced to the beleaguered unemployed movement of the early 1930s.

The decline of the Georgia Unemployed Councils after 1933 resulted from a combination of factors. Not the least of these was the weakness of the Georgia industrial base and the dispersal of working-class neighborhoods. In contrast to the dynamic worker community of Alabama, centered on mining and steel manufacture, that critical mass was missing in Georgia. As the Georgia-born African American Communist Hosea Hudson observed, there were industrial workers in Atlanta, but "they wasn't [*sic*] congregated together . . . the working class neighborhood . . . it makes a lot of difference."[61] Moreover, Communist Party organizers of the unemployed were chronically short of funds in the period from 1930 to 1933. This problem was further exacerbated by the limited personnel available for the organizational work underway in Georgia. Both Communist Party district organizers and Atlanta section leaders bemoaned the national party's persistent unwillingness to take the Georgia opportunity seriously and to fund it sufficiently.

Beyond money and personnel, the internal squabbling evident in the party correspondence must also be considered in any explanation of the Georgia unemployed movement's difficulties. The Atlanta jobless were served by a succession of Communist Party organizers whose talents left much to be desired. With the notable exception of the charismatic Angelo Herndon, neither national organizers nor Georgia comrades distinguished themselves as leaders. It was only the combination of Herndon's aggressive organizing and the relief crisis of 1932 that brought the movement a modicum of success, which was short-lived as a result of official repression.

In the final analysis, the intrusive behavior of the state security apparatus was the critical factor in accounting for the troubled struggle of the Georgia jobless. To be sure, there was an element of hyperbole in the Communists' persistent denunciation of the "terror" in Georgia; but the reality of repression was sobering to all who contemplated making demands on the government for public assistance. There can be no doubt that the reckless employment of the antiquated insurrection law in the cases of the Atlanta Six and Angelo Herndon played a crucial role in the suppression of mass action by the unemployed. Fear of police power combined with traditional racial assumptions and the vulnerability of

African American workers to undermine class-based protest in Depression-era Georgia. State intervention, while not absent in other national venues, was devastating in the South, where the heavy hand of the past compromised the position of a long-suffering working class.

Following the Herndon conviction in 1933, a new Red Scare in 1934 was to remind the powerless that the state remained vigilant in protecting Georgia citizens from the virus of radicalism.[62] Moreover, the volatile textile strike of 1934 would convince middle-class Georgians of the dangers presented by alleged Communist infiltration of the labor movement. Similarly, the relentless pursuit of the Herndon case revealed the state's intent to keep the issue of Communist influence in Georgia before the public. Anticommunism was to remain a prominent theme in the suppression of labor and denial of civil rights for years to come. In defiance of these pressures, first the United Textile Workers and later the Communist-led Workers Alliance remained on the scene to again organize workers and aid the unemployed under new circumstances, thereby raising anew the specter of radicalism.

The decline of Communist Party activism signaled the end of the first stage in the state's organized unemployed movement. Yet in defiance of an interventionist state, Georgia workers and farmers continued their search for an institutional voice in the struggle against deprivation. To a surprising extent, the appeal of radical alternatives to the inadequate responses of conservatives, elite reformers, and middle-class liberals in Atlanta's moment of crisis remained substantial. The story of the state's early unemployed movement laid bare the reality of class-based protest and momentary interracial cooperation among Georgia's most impoverished citizens as they confronted the devastating economic collapse of the 1930s.

Beyond Atlanta

The Struggle of Georgia's Rural Jobless

Any analysis of the Depression's casualties in Georgia cannot overlook the plight of the state's rural citizens, who represented a significant majority of the population. While Atlanta's jobless workers had moved steadily toward a collective response to the economic crisis, the inhabitants of rural, small-town areas were slower to coalesce for a variety of reasons. As Hosea Hudson observed, urban neighborhood concentration was vital to effective organizational work. While the dispersal of Atlanta workers complicated Hudson's work with the city's unemployed and destitute, the isolation found in rural areas made such efforts much more difficult. Despite this handicap, there is some evidence that Communist Party organizers attempted to defy the odds in response to policies adopted at the highest levels of party leadership. The party worked to organize among African American sharecroppers in Georgia's Black Belt districts, especially in the southwestern corner of the state. The paucity of source material makes it difficult to document the institutional results of these sporadic efforts, but there can be no doubt that African American tenants and sharecroppers in areas bordering Alabama were aware of Communist activism in that state and that some sought to replicate those advances. Further to the north, white workers and small farmers were the primary targets of organizational efforts that focused on the Rome area and other Floyd and Bartow county locations. Finally, in scattered rural areas, unemployed activists sought ways to provide adequate relief to black and white farmers, efforts that often antagonized the plant-

ers whose economic livelihoods were dependent on access to cheap and compliant labor. While there were occasional successes for the advocates of the rural dispossessed, the overall results were mixed at best, complicated as they were by ingrained racial assumptions, the labor surplus, and harsh economic reality.

As Robin Kelley has ably demonstrated, the key organizational vehicle for delivery of the Communist Party's rural message in the South was the Share Cropper's Union (SCU) and its predecessor, the Croppers and Farm Workers Union, which by 1930 had begun to make significant inroads in Alabama, primarily among African American tenants, sharecroppers, and agricultural wage workers. In 1931, Alabama's Black Belt sharecroppers and tenants challenged the power of Lee and Tallapoosa county landowners after they attempted to cut off food allowances and prevent their workers from assembling to hear a presentation on the Scottsboro case and discuss collective action. The bloody result, movingly described by both Kelley and Mark Solomon, was the Camp Hill shootout, which left cropper Ralph Gray dead and led to a reign of terror that ended in the arrest of thirty-seven union members. The incident was only the first of several violent confrontations that were to mark the brief history of sharecroppers' unionism in Depression-era Alabama. Undaunted by the ferocity of the landowner/police reaction, the croppers reorganized as the underground SCU in September 1931 and launched an even more widespread organizational effort in the heart of the Black Belt.[1] Their defiant response to repression inspired the African American underclass to new acts of resistance, even on the more unfriendly turf of rural Georgia.

While Communist Party organizers had focused on the urban unemployed of Atlanta, Rome, Savannah, and Augusta, it soon became obvious that rural Georgia also offered an opportunity to expand the party base in the state. Since the earliest days of the Great Depression the state had been caught in the grip of the cotton crisis that plagued the entire South. In November 1931, POUR state coordinator Robert W. Woodruff asserted that although urban unemployment had been a challenge, the committee's "real problem [was] in the agricultural areas," where "farmers, while not classed as unemployed, [were] suffering materially from the depression," especially the tenants. Crop conditions and low prices meant that the entire cotton crop was needed to satisfy the previous year's debts, leaving farmers with nothing to meet family needs during the coming winter. Yet it was "difficult to provide any organized means of relief" for the "farming class." This situation worsened over the early years of the Great Depression, and even after the New Deal began to provide rural work relief through the Civil Works Administration (CWA)

in 1933, large numbers of unemployed rural workers remained available for seasonal employment. As a result, Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) informant Lorena Hickok told CWA chief Harry Hopkins that in Jackson as well as other northeast Georgia counties farmers maintained that there remained a substantial labor surplus. Indeed, one Jackson County landowner asserted that a thousand more CWA workers could be employed for a year, and "there'd still be no shortage of farm labor in this county."[2]

To Communist Party organizers in party district 17, the crisis meant an opening wedge for organization. As early as 1930 the Central Committee in New York and the national party grasped the meaning of the South's deepening rural crisis, which called for close coordination of the party's Negro Department, Agrarian Department, and the party-sponsored United Farmers League organization in a "special study of the agrarian situation in the South" and a "special program adapted to the Southern conditions." Convinced that there was a close connection in the South between the "industrial proletariat and the agrarian masses," the Communist Party's Seventh National Convention adopted a thesis emphasizing cropper mobilization and party "organization of relief work for the strikers" in the rural South.[3] As of summer 1931, however, the party's interest was embryonic. Events in Alabama demonstrated clearly that grassroots resistance to landowner domination, the struggle for adequate relief, and reactions to economic misery preceded the party's active engagement in the rural struggle, which came in response to appeals for party help from desperate croppers. Among the party activists drawn into the SCU struggle were African Americans Hosea Hudson and Al Murphy, both Georgia-born Alabama Communists. Following the Camp Hill battle, Murphy was dispatched to organize the sharecropper resistance, which drew the veiled support of impoverished rural whites as well as blacks, especially after Murphy shifted attention to organizational discipline rather than open resistance to Jim Crow. Part and parcel of the new drive was the pragmatic decision to look beyond the self-determination thesis, which was increasingly subordinated to concentration on the African American's day-to-day struggle for existence. As organizers came to realize that practical immediate demands drew more support than long-term goals, the self-determination argument became more and more a "Sunday ritual" repeated only as a final objective in the class struggle. Despite the nuanced change in emphasis, Murphy regarded his work as absolutely revolutionary in that the new economic and political demands "represent[ed] the unfinished business of the Civil War" and led to the "liberation of the Negro people of the South."[4]

While the center of the party's rural organizational work was clearly Alabama, there is evidence that by mid-1932, cropper resistance was developing in border areas of west Georgia. In February 1932, a national party resolution called for the acceleration of southern organization among black sharecroppers, with emphasis on moving out from Camp Hill to adjacent areas. Meanwhile, District 17 functionaries saw the "sharpening of the crisis in agriculture" as a growth opportunity but acknowledged that in most cases the party remained "isolated from the developing struggle of the poor farmers and workers." These limitations aside, Birmingham argued that "the growing radicalization [had] created an exceptionally favorable opportunity" for mass mobilization as evidenced just across the state line in West Point, Georgia, where farmers were already "developing their own mass movements." The influence of the Alabama militants was clearly felt among Georgia's embattled sharecroppers. By late 1932 the confrontations at Camp Hill and Reeltown had drawn the attention of sharecroppers in the Black Belt areas of southwest Georgia, where units of SCU began to develop, together with new women's auxiliary organizations and youth groups. As Mark Solomon has noted, the Reeltown battle was becoming a "hymn of resistance throughout the rural South."[5]

As early as 1931 there had been indications that in west Georgia, landless farmers looked to the party as a last resort in the hour of need. In March, several Silver Creek and Cedartown croppers appealed to the *Southern Worker* for assistance in organizing to fight for "real relief." With hundreds facing economic disaster in their communities, desperate men and women sought instructions on "how to fight starvation." After reading a batch of Communist literature, another Silver Creek farmer wrote the party organizer in Birmingham that he and his friends thought this material and the party argument was "the very thing." He insisted that he and his friends were "ready to take sides with [the Party] in this matter." In rural areas of Georgia beyond the Communist reach, other angry farmers turned instead to the NAACP for support. In August 1931, for example, residents of Lincolnton and Coffee counties, in northeast and southwest Georgia, charged in complaints to the *Chicago Defender* and the NAACP that brutal peonage existed in their areas, where workers were allegedly bound to the land. As Sallie Miller of Coffee County saw things, she and her husband were "in slavery." Isolated and beyond the reach of organization, the Millers were vulnerable to the demands of their overlords; powerless to effect a change, the NAACP was equally frustrated, especially when its urgent complaints fell on deaf ears at the Justice Department due to insufficient evidence of compulsory service.[6] In

the last analysis, appeals for help failed to translate into concrete gains for SCU or any other organization; it was one thing for the Communist Party to call farmers to the revolution and quite another to deliver meaningful assistance, particularly to those who resided in small communities far removed from the urban centers of Birmingham and Atlanta and the relatively safe havens they provided. Nonetheless, the union's limited gains document the willingness of the rural poor to coalesce and resist planter exploitation even as they revealed the depth of the sharecroppers' need.

Meanwhile, at some distance, the Communist Party Central Committee's Agit-Prop Department seized upon the charges of peonage in the South to label sharecroppers rural "proletarians" abused by the landlord capitalist, who took advantage of their helpless position "to secure [their] labor throughout the season by deferring [the] 'wages' payment until the crop [was] gathered." While the party-dominated United Farmers League made broad demands on behalf of southern farmers, the party agrarian department called upon district organizers to pay special attention to African American farmers, tenants, and sharecroppers in the South so that opportunity could be translated into political gains. It is clear that party attention was focused on the organization of rural blacks as the backbone of its agricultural program in the South. This emphasis, together with an appeal to the black unemployed and a perfunctory call for self-determination in the Black Belt, was to remain the backbone of Communist Party efforts among the African Americans of the Southeast throughout the 1930s.[7]

In rural Georgia, African American rural resistance remained isolated and contained. A letter from a Thomasville Communist sheds light on some of the obstacles faced by Georgia comrades in their fight to avoid starvation and peonage. John A. Cobb wrote District 17 organizers that while he remained true to the cause, the African American clergy worked to "mislede [*sic*]" black farmers into believing they would "eat pie-in-the-sky." At the same time, rural workers faced the additional threat posed by the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce officials who touted the "Forward Georgia" movement, which emphasized the removal of the urban unemployed to rural areas where they might bolster the surplus labor force. Chamber president Roy Le Craw disingenuously insisted that rural counties "badly needed their departed farmers" and that the "transplanted farmers then standing in Atlanta bread lines were in desperate need of getting back to the farms." His initiative drew support from some members of Atlanta's African American elite, such as AME (African Methodist Episcopal Church) bishop Alfred Fountain, who saw "too many of [his] race walking the streets of the cities and begging bread." However, this

program was abandoned in the Atlanta area, though there was a more successful effort in distant Columbus to return jobless urban workers to farming communities. While rural landowners were only too anxious to encourage "sober people" to "work regularly and conform to the rules and regulations of the plantation," it is equally true that this labor shortage rarely extended beyond the harvest season, which meant that an urban relief problem was replaced by a seasonal rural relief crisis. To Communist organizer Nat Ross, mass starvation was a "common fact," and the "farming situation [grew] worse steadily," while Atlanta authorities allegedly "told the starving unemployed to go back to the farm." Reporting a rise in rural militancy, Clarina Michelson claimed that by August 1932, the farmers had "become so militant that their farms can't be taken from them despite the fact that they pay no taxes."[8]

By 1933, the issue of rural relief had reached crisis proportions. The much-maligned Red Cross relief programs failed to meet the needs of the poor and landless, who often encountered discrimination and delays in provisioning. Georgia Red Cross officials in several places maintained that they "would give these croppers seeds but they were too lazy" and simply did not "know how to grow their gardens," a questionable assertion at best. Moreover, sociologist Arthur Raper found that Red Cross relief was administered in Black Belt counties "so that the local plantation Negroes virtually bought from the local planters and merchants the flour and cloth which were meant for them as a gift." In some cases, he noted, the landowners "appropriated all the saleable crops of their tenants and then recommended them to the Red Cross for food and clothing." Even the black establishment's *Atlanta Daily World* admitted that while the Red Cross had a good national record, its reputation was "excellent . . . except in the South." The reality of long delays for African Americans persuaded the *World* that "direct government action" was needed to supplant "relief Jim Crow." The Communist Party later joined in the criticism of the Red Cross, which it dismissed as a "putrid organization which thrives and grows fat on the starvation of little children . . . and does nothing." The central theme in District 17's appeals to the farmers of Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee was an endorsement of mass action to demand relief; party literature exhorted farmers to "join hands with the unemployed workers of the towns and with their organizations which are fighting the same battle for bread."[9]

In the view of the CIC's Will Alexander, these appeals had quite largely fallen on deaf ears. He told Bishop F. F. Reese in Savannah that he thought it "a little queer" that the Communist appeal on the unemployment issue had "not had more influence." Alexander's perspective reflected that of

the black and white elites, whose organizations, in his view, had "subtly" succeeded in defusing the issue of joblessness. The confidence of this assertion reflected his distance from Tallapoosa County and the Georgia-Alabama line, where the Dadeville shootout of December 1932 had accentuated the gap between the lived experience of African American sharecroppers and middle-class liberals. Contrary to Alexander's easy assumption, the relief struggle had been a central issue in the founding of the SCU. To the black press, the violence in Alabama, while revealing the Communist Party's "militant resistance to discrimination," was counterproductive. The *Atlanta Daily World* urged African Americans to "unite, not to stage gun battles with officers of the law, but to battle for our rights legally in the courts, and economically through mass-owned businesses giving employment to negroes." This course, which would lead to real independence, would "do more to benefit the Negro than all the Communist propaganda in Russia." In the *World*'s judgment, "Communist organizations [were] seeking to use the Negro merely as a fagot to light the fires of political revolution."[10]

Both Alexander and Arthur Raper had recently assured Communist agricultural leader Lement Harris that the venerable tenant system was "on its last legs." And to Lorena Hickok, it appeared that many CWA and FERA administrators shared this analysis, which assumed that Georgia and other southeastern states were "just about through as cotton producing states." Alexander also told Harris, quite disingenuously, that "if [he] were a Negro, [he] would be hide and hair for the Communists." As he moved through Colquitt County in south Georgia, Lem Harris encountered firsthand the oppressive relief scheme embraced by bankers and planters, who advanced sharecroppers loans just so long as they agreed to "submit to absolute supervision." This "live at home program" was, in fact, a thinly veiled plan to ensure constant production of cash crops in return for subsistence money, a system that Harris quickly identified for what it was: "a form of feudal peasantry." The drawbacks of this arrangement were later identified by Hickok, who quoted one prominent northeast Georgia citizen's frank assertion that it resulted in "thousands and thousands of Niggers in this state living in slavery just as real as it ever was before the Civil War." Her informant, Lincoln O'Connell, explained that "a farmer considers every Nigger living in a house—or the worst kind of shack you ever saw—on his place employed, whether he is paying him anything or not." Likewise, a Colquitt County CWA administrator reported that most farmers in his area took advantage of "the fact that their share-croppers [could not] read or write, with the result that in many cases, at the end of the season, the sharecropper doesn't get a

thing and there isn't anything he can do about it." Rather, black farmers worked for "a shell of a house, a few sticks of wood to burn, a few grits, and a little pork, that's all." One sociological analysis of rural Meriweather County revealed that one of the greatest "shortcomings of the 'furnishing' system" was the outright refusal of landowners to improve sharecropper dwellings that fell "into almost incredible disrepair."[11]

In truth, the respected scholar Arthur Raper understood that the old system died hard; however, his remedy was difficult to implement. While he had endorsed more extensive African American land ownership as early as 1930, Raper's program neglected to address the means by which tenants might acquire the capital necessary to make the transition. Moreover, he was fully aware of the collusion between the Red Cross and the planters, who often "cleaned out" their tenants and left them for the "Cross" to feed. Raper's 1933 report on the rural relief system in Alabama and Georgia acknowledged that "the whole Red Cross Service, like everything else in these black belt counties, [was] so completely within the control of the few planters that the local Red Cross administrator was usually little more than an agent of the planters." Since many local Cross administrators were "altogether unmindful of the best methods of relief giving," it was not surprising that no field workers "got into the more out-of-the way places" and that "some of the more helpless and distant families [had] not been adequately served." Raper concluded that the harsh economic conditions had bred "new techniques of exploitation" as Red Cross services adapted to "the traditional exploitative practices of the plantation system." As a result of low wages on plantations, Red Cross rations, when delivered, often competed with planters' provisions for the available laborers. Consequently, Raper argued, "the authority of the planter class [was] being undermined, and in some instances, openly challenged." He understood that the agricultural depression, especially in cotton production, was rooted in the ravages of the boll weevil and found its origins in a steep decline that had begun in the early 1920s. Propped up by heavy borrowing and reliance on extensive tenant labor, Raper argued, the plantation system was "already crumbling." He predicted that a "vast adjustment" was imminent, due to "the prevalent unrest among the landless farmers."[12]

Moving to capitalize on latent cropper-tenant dissatisfaction, in early 1933 the Communist Party called on southern farm hands and jobless tenants, both black and white, to "organize and fight together with the city workers under the leadership of the Communist Party" against the evolving cotton control program of the young Roosevelt administration. The party envisioned city workers as collaborators who could "show

fighting farmers how to conduct their fight for relief," while farmers could help provision unemployed and striking workers. Small farmers were to form permanent "Committees of Action," composed of black and white rural workers who could "fight shoulder to shoulder against their common oppressors, the landlords and bankers" and resist the "race prejudice poison of the landlord." Alarmed by these appeals, the black press was at pains to assure readers that "Communism [had] not made much headway among Negroes." While the response was indeed modest, it is undeniable that by 1932 the Communist Party had established a small beachhead in the South, though party insiders acknowledged that in the entire Southeast, there were fewer than five hundred party members. In the words of James S. Allen, editor of *Southern Worker*, "it took great courage to join the Party in the South."[13]

Yet the era of the Great Depression was not the first time that rural Georgians had demonstrated courage in defiance of great odds. In the 1890s, Populism had raised a formidable challenge to the ruling elite of rural Georgia before the poison of race hatred had turned the tide against the rebels. And even more recently, southern and especially southwestern Georgia had been the heart of the state's Garvey movement in the 1920s. As Mary Rolinson has demonstrated, it is an error to dismiss Garveyism as simply an urban back-to-Africa phenomenon; in fact, a movement with deep rural roots in the South, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), expressed a covert ideology of resistance that in Georgia flourished in the farming districts of the remote southwest. Strongest in the Black Belt, this movement engaged substantial numbers of black tenant farmers and sharecroppers in organizational activity that predisposed them to the collective themes that emerged in the 1930s. While the NAACP was the most active black advocacy organization to interest itself in the rural poor of south Georgia, there remained a strong popular interest in the UNIA and its organ, the *Negro World*. A movement that stressed race consciousness and political organization among African Americans, Garveyism and its nationalistic ideology developed outside the boundaries of elite society.[14] In short, on the eve of the Great Depression, African Americans in the Albany-Columbus area and the Black Belt counties had already demonstrated a willingness to act collectively through the Garvey movement.

For Alabama and Georgia farmers, especially hard-pressed African American croppers, the Share Croppers Union became the Depression-era organizational expression of resistance. SCU membership burgeoned to more than 3,000 in June 1933, with a strong spurt of growth in the vicinity between La Fayette, Alabama, and West Point, Georgia. Close

proximity to the sites of the union's militant acts of resistance meant that farmers in Georgia's border counties were well aware of the hope offered by collective action. Organizers reported that SCU "influence" was "moving rapidly east into Georgia," partly due to publicity surrounding the Scottsboro case. In addition, Communist activist Al Murphy predicted that the recent imprisonment of Georgia tenant Brewer Finley after a SCU-inspired citizens' group had forced the reversal of his eviction was certain to "give impetus to the more rapid growth of the union's prestige among the north Alabama and West Georgia croppers and tenants." Faced by eviction and removal of his personal property from his house, Finley appealed to the party, which responded with an "anti-eviction committee" that defied the sheriff and bailiff by restoring his possessions to his home. His subsequent arrest intensified the militancy produced by the clash and created an opening for further organizational work among African American croppers. Evictions and withholding of relief benefits were the twin weapons in the planters' arsenal. In order to minimize the impact of such threats, SCU took pains to remain an underground organization so that members would not suffer the wrath of landlords and relief authorities. By 1934, these tactics had borne fruit in the stubborn and steady growth of the Alabama cropper's union under "leadership from radical sources."[15]

Party organizers recognized that the development of SCU was largely due to the defiant resistance of African American tenants and sharecroppers, which they perceived as an opportunity for party growth. Acknowledging the obstacles they faced, Communist activists admitted that work among white farmers had "progressed slowly," largely because there had been no white organizer sent into the Black Belt. While a few white farmers were reading their literature "regularly," it had been impossible to form a white farmers' "committee of action." Nonetheless, on more than one occasion whites were quoted as responding to the resistance at Reeltown and Camp Hill with such remarks as "those boys done just what I would have done [*sic*]."[16] These sympathies remained latent, however, in the absence of a white organizer to build the SCU and the ILD. In the deep Black Belt, African Americans remained at the forefront of the rural resistance.

While alarming to planters and middle-class liberals, Communist Party rural inroads in Georgia were limited, generally confined to those areas bordering Alabama, where the SCU influence was most strongly felt. North of West Point, Clyde Johnson worked to organize white farmers in the Floyd County area, where the party had built a small following. When the Minnesota-born Communist Party farm organizer first arrived

in the Rome area, he worked to build local support for the Farm Holiday Association, a militant farm organization already making waves with its aggressive protest actions in the Midwest. Committed to both the Holiday Association and Share Croppers Union, Johnson quickly "got tied in to the farmers around Adairsville and the foundry workers in Rome." At this time, workers at the Southern Co-operative Foundry were on strike after their international, the Iron Moulders Union, had abandoned them and cut off aid due to their refusal to accept a settlement. At the request of the desperate strikers, Johnson faced a stony silence until the union president, Emmet Parks, introduced himself and said, "we want to know what you got to say." His suggestion was a "commonplace idea," reliance on sympathetic local farmers for help. With the active support of party comrade Don West and his Floyd Country relatives, Manuel and Willis Sutton, Johnson worked to implement the Communist Party program to build farmer-labor unity by persuading farmers to back the strikers. Johnson organized food collections among local farmers to supply provisions to worker families, a relief effort that won him support from the unionists as well as the attention of the local police, who soon ordered him out of the community.[17]

While working with the Floyd County farmers and workers, Johnson also assisted a dissident student faction at the Martha Berry School in an attempted strike for higher wages on work-study jobs. The Berry School, like many of the mission schools found elsewhere in south Appalachia, used outside donations to offer educational opportunity to mountain children whose schooling would otherwise have been neglected. At this time a precollegiate institution, Berry was heavily funded by Henry Ford and other donors who saw value in the preservation of rural culture. Not surprisingly, as a former Berry student, West resented the influence of industrial capital and argued that Berry actually stripped Appalachian youth of their mountain culture. The result of West's determined resistance to the Berry system had been his expulsion from the school in 1926 and his decision to pursue other educational opportunities. Thus, when the dissident students contacted both West and the National Student League (NSL) for organizational help, the decision to send Johnson to Floyd County was predictable. While Johnson worked directly with the student protestors, it was the party's Atlanta section leader Don West who assigned him to explore the Berry dispute. Due to his own student experiences, West had close contacts in the Rome area, including several relatives, some of whom shared his radical ideas. West and Johnson therefore had no difficulty in establishing rapport with local farmers, whose prices were allegedly being undercut by Berry produce raised with

captive student labor. Hoping to capitalize on a shared interest, then, the student strikers extended a hand to Floyd and Bartow county farmers whom, they argued, were "faced with starvation and poverty [that] winter." Local farmers, the students maintained, were "exploited and cheated by rich men," who flooded the market with cheaply produced commodities and continued to "make it hard for you farmers to get anything for what you raise."[18]

While the school denied the charges against it, there is some evidence of student dissatisfaction with the Berry educational system. Dissident students decried the campus's rigid social restrictions and resented recent reductions in work credit, which seemed shortsighted in view of Depression conditions. The result was an attempted work boycott by protesters who denounced "forced labor" at substandard wages. Some students carried out a short-lived labor stoppage, though Berry officials denied a strike had occurred. One former student, Walker Martin, agreed with the strikers that their "rights of self expression [were] curbed, that [they] were governed in a very autocratic and childish manner—being allowed practically no liberty—and that [they were] underpaid for the work [they did]." Turning to Floyd and Bartow county farmers for support, the resisters charged that Berry took promising Georgia students, who were educated and lost to the city rather than returned to their communities. Martin, who had studied at Berry for four months, charged that "the wealth at Berry [had] been wrung from the working people by the capitalist class and exhibited as proof of their superiority."[19] It is nearly certain that this argument against the Berry School's attitude toward students was the work of the angry Don West.

While the strike was stillborn, the brief walkout was not the end of the story. In response to an appeal from West, the left-wing NSL disseminated a critical leaflet to students, Berry trustees, and school supporters throughout the United States. While not formally affiliated with the Communist Party, Berry authorities argued, the League was "an out and out communistic organization" whose purpose was to "assist workers to accomplish a revolution." In response, Walker Martin unleashed a blistering attack on the servants of capital at Berry, who had crushed the student revolt. Claiming only to defend student rights, Don West followed up on the original NSL initiative with a letter to the *New Republic*, in which he chided Berry for its overbearing paternalism, authoritarianism, and exploitation of student labor.[20]

What West, Martin, and Johnson perceived in Floyd County was that farmers and workers could, in fact, be drawn into a cooperative relationship when class interests were at stake. The young northern

radical later recalled his shock at learning that west Georgia laborers, both urban and rural, were descended from mountaineers, many of whom had opposed slavery, favored the Union during the Civil War, resented large landowners, and now hated the new industrial aristocracy.[21] To Johnson, these rural, small-town proletarians seemed likely candidates for the construction of an urban-rural revolutionary alliance. Yet the evidence suggests that despite Depression hardship, farm radicalism failed to take on organizational form at this time in most sections of rural Georgia. With the notable exception of west Georgia border areas and the Black Belt communities, neither the SCU nor other radical farmer movements made serious inroads in Georgia during the early 1930s, an outcome that is striking in view of the oppressiveness and abuses found in rural areas of the state.[22]

Part of the explanation lies in the absence of local leadership in Georgia comparable to the grassroots militancy found in Alabama and the Mississippi delta. Georgia-born radicals such as Hosea Hudson and Al Murphy were able to move into Tallapoosa County and other Alabama hot spots where homegrown radicalism took root in a defiant African American community. Trumping Georgia's strong Populist–Farmers Union tradition, the omnipresent state repression underscored by Atlanta's enforcement of the insurrection law cast a pall over radical efforts to organize farmers, the unemployed, and workers in opposition to the urban authorities and the rural planters. The presence of racial divisions also hampered class-based mobilization efforts, which typically encountered determined resistance to any movement perceived as a threat to the established social order. Finally, as Clyde Johnson later observed, the Communist Party simply failed to commit sufficient resources to the southern rural organizational drive, which typically took a back seat to the problem of the urban unemployed and industrial workers. In October 1933, party leader Syd Benson confirmed this weakness, insisting that white committees of action were desperately needed among farmers in the Montgomery–West Point area as the next step in the development of rural party unity. Johnson later recalled that in Georgia, a long history of agrarian radicalism, together with the shift from sharecropping to wage labor on the plantations, presented a clear opening for party organization that was missed, in part because he simply could not be active in all areas of opportunity. Although there were potential indigenous leaders, Communists could not possibly "have spread [themselves] any thinner." While he remained in Rome seeking to organize the Farm Holiday Association, Clyde Johnson was finally driven out of the area, harassed, beaten, and largely unsuccessful in his effort at farmer organization in Georgia. To

Johnson, the party "really missed the boat" and "flubbed . . . an opportunity to organize there."[23]

Although they denied its existence, the fact is that Alabama and Georgia planters sharpened class conflict in rural areas. SCU organizers insisted that "class consciousness [was] taught by the landlord from an early age." Johnson observed that while neither the cropper nor the landowner would know the term, "they live what they mean." With all branches of government "controlled completely by the landlord-banker alliance," Atlanta capital and banking interests ruled in support of the "old landlord system," which was itself caught in the larger shift to "commercial and outside ownership." Hence, the situation in rural Georgia was ripe for Communist Party organization that never really materialized, despite Montgomery party organizer Syd Benson's conviction that the Black Belt region was destined to be the headquarters for the SCU. Benson saw Montgomery as the nerve center of a Black Belt network that would be "the connecting link between Selma, Tallapoosa, and the Georgia line." By 1935, the Alabama-based SCU claimed 12,000 members, at least 2,500 of them in neighboring states, including Georgia. African American labor activist John P. Davis was more conservative, estimating membership at 8,000, including Georgia and the Carolinas. Davis marveled at SCU's "marked growth," which he attributed to its militant "program of liberation for these poorest elements of the Southern farm population." These bold claims were not unrelated to their author's determination to show that African Americans had been falsely characterized as "scabs" who "[would] not organize."[24] The power and appeal of SCU among rural African Americans in Alabama was strong, but the voice of the Georgia contingent was much more muted. Johnson asserted that locals were formed in the Carolinas and Georgia, but that he "couldn't prove that" because "they never affiliated" with SCU; nonetheless, he insisted that there was organizational activity, though relatively little party membership. So it was that when the Communist Party organized a farm workers school in early 1934, the hesitant croppers failed to respond. Nat Ross reported that while the overall effort was promising, in terms of concrete farmer mobilization, "Georgia was a flop unfortunately."[25]

An important aspect of the explanation may lie in Arthur Raper's analysis of Georgia race relations in early 1933. Raper concluded that there had been a "recent mass movement of Negroes" to the cities, which had seen the removal in the preceding five years of 200,000 black farmers from rural Georgia alone. He later recalled that Depression-era Atlanta had become "the sharecropper headquarters of the South," which was "a demoralizing experience for Atlanta to go through." This demographic

trend also indicated that overall, "city bread-line Negroes" were not returning to rural Georgia. Rather, sharecroppers who had been "pushed off the land and refugeed" in Atlanta became a "drag on the welfare facilities . . . the health of the community . . . the spirit of the community." While city leaders hoped to "dump their unemployed upon the rural communities," Raper insisted, such proposals could "be attractive to thoughtful people only when our city controlled national and state and county governments are willing to direct back to rural areas a larger proportion of the national surpluses." To promote racial comity, it was essential to remember that "to achieve security for any one member of any group we must be moving in the direction of a greater security for every member of every group."[26] Raper's analysis was not optimistic about prospects for such a redistribution of resources in the short run.

Nor were Georgia's agricultural employers prepared to raise living standards for their largely African American labor force. Once the New Deal's crop reduction program was implemented, African American sharecroppers were systematically cheated out of their share of federal allotment checks, routinely receiving only half of the supports owed them. Similarly, FERA programs were often administered to the disadvantage of hard-pressed croppers. Not only were rural relief programs cautious and penurious in their dispensing of relief funds, but there is strong evidence to indicate that access to public assistance was manipulated by planters and local officials to ensure a large and docile labor force, especially at harvest time. It was widely assumed among landowners and the politicians who served them that increasing the minimum wage for work relief programs would "disrupt the agricultural labor system" in rural Georgia and, in the words of historian Numan V. Bartley, "encourage serious social maladjustment." As a consequence the South had become the "sweatshop of the nation." One observer acknowledged to Lorena Hickok that "we wanted to keep [the African American] down and—did. But we dragged ourselves down, too." According to Michael Holmes, white fears were not entirely unfounded, in that the federal relief program eventually implemented by the Roosevelt administration threatened the entire "paternalistic Southern rural class and caste structure."[27]

These doubts, together with the widely held southern (indeed American) assumption that financial success or failure was explainable in terms of divine grace or unredeemed sinfulness, led many Georgians to view relief programs with a wary eye. For landowners, piety converged conveniently with economic self-interest, as dependable and compliant labor was deemed essential to their economic well-being; consequently, these

attitudes provided solemn justification for wage policies designed to maintain social control and economic dominance.

Meanwhile, the embattled southern liberal establishment busied itself gathering information on the impact of relief policies on the poorest of the poor. In 1933, the CIC kept "close watch" on relief distribution and work programs to see that the needs of the African American jobless were met. Their research persuaded them that the policies of local relief officials were "commendable." At the same time, the commission was forced to admit that "not a few situations involving neglect and discrimination [had been] discovered and dealt with through the proper authorities." A case in point involved the welfare administrators of Millen in rural southeast Georgia, who in August 1933 halted local work relief programs "on account of farmers and others wanting labor performed at very low wages." Rejecting local employers' argument that the federal wage standard of 30 cents per hour was "ruinous to them," federal authorities ordered Georgia state relief administrator Gay Bolling Shepperson to ensure the resumption of the Millen work relief program. This planter complaint was commonly expressed by rural employers, who consistently opposed generous relief policies, even the modest efforts of the Red Cross. In the words of one planter, who prevented his workers from seeking private relief, "the more tenants get from the Red Cross, the less they'll have to have from the landlord." The essential problem, according to Arthur Raper, was planter penury when establishing wage levels. To Raper, African American employment decisions were merely enlightened self-interest: in the words of one tenant, "why work anyway, when I can quit work and get 'on the Cross.' I get more when I'm 'on the Cross' than when I work." In sharp disagreement was Jackson County banker Stacey Turner (also chairman of the local relief committee and chairman of the county commission), who thought CWA workers needed only $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents an hour, which, he insisted, would make them perfectly happy. Lorena Hickok quoted a Turner tirade in a report to Harry Hopkins:

> "It's charity, nothing else," he roared—he's the kind that roars and then watches out of the corner of his eye to see if you're scared. "They should be paid charity wages. Pay 'em $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents an hour and let 'em play checkers for it. They ain't doing any work that amounts to anything, anyway."[28]

These local suspicions of external efforts to offer basic welfare provision made Shepperson's job a thankless task. Walking a thin line between federal administrators and the powerful planters of Georgia, Shepperson worked to implement federal relief programs in an equitable fashion,

which often satisfied no one, but frequently angered the labor-hungry landowners. In August 1934, for example, Hickok dutifully reported to Harry Hopkins that in south Georgia, contrary to employer criticisms, Shepperson's department was not operating at cross-purposes with the planters. Rather, by instructing local Georgia Emergency Relief Administration (GERA) officials to make "every effort possible" to supply farm labor for the picking season and literally force rural relief workers to accept employment "where opportunities for working were bona fide," her office essentially collaborated with the local landowners. Indeed, in some localities, every relief client on the rolls was taken off public assistance to ensure that the seasonal demand for labor would be met. Nonetheless, her office drew fire from many south Georgia planters who persisted in offering employment at wages below the prevailing rate. When the federal standard was introduced in 1933, a number of Georgia counties discontinued their relief programs temporarily, while eleven refused federal funds "primarily because of the wage scale which conflicted with local wages paid on farms." Resistance to the federal minimum, which was strongest in rural Georgia, eventually induced GERA to adopt the policy that relief clients must be offered prevailing wages before being dropped from the rolls.[29] While poor white and black sharecroppers sometimes protested this policy, most were pleased with government programs like CWA. When it did arise, worker criticism often focused on favoritism in the local administration of federal hiring programs. One group of disgruntled petitioners in Jeff Davis County, for example, asked for a "square deal" in CWA employment, insisting that jobs were "given to a chosen bunch and section of the county," while local authorities failed to "treat [them] courteous."[30] In most cases, however, it was the employers of agricultural labor who attacked the federal administration of the Georgia relief system, which, they alleged, placed them at a competitive disadvantage in the rural labor market.

In her reports on the relief situation in Georgia, Harry Hopkins's traveling informant Lorena Hickok tended to discount the gloomy forecasts of the federal bureaucrats she encountered. In Georgia, she found the Roosevelt administration's policies widely popular, especially the CWA work relief program. She proclaimed that despite its many problems, "the state of the nation" in the South was "darned good" and there was "generally a feeling of optimism down here." Perhaps, she speculated, it would be necessary to just "let the more efficient people have work and support the less efficient." Writing from agricultural Colquitt County, she told Hopkins that for farmers, CWA did not "do anything to remedy the situation permanently." On the contrary, she agreed with Gay

Shepperson that "by some means or other, these people have got to be removed from the labor market in Georgia." Only then would "farm labor get any sort of break in this state." It seemed "fairly obvious" to Hickok that the "only way out" was to "remove from the labor market enough poor whites and blacks so that members of both races who are left will have some sort of chance."[31]

But which rural workers were expendable? Hickok's whirlwind tour through Georgia had not included a stop on the home ground of the Share Cropper's Union in the southwestern corner of the state. In the west Georgia Black Belt, some of the rural poor sought radical solutions to the problem of grinding poverty. In May 1934 Communist organizer Al Murphy reported 6,000 members, most of them in Alabama "and a section of Georgia." Denouncing the eviction of thousands of sharecroppers as an indirect result of the Roosevelt farm program, Murphy cited an effective labor boycott of an offending planter and a successful SCU women's relief delegation to the CWA offices as evidence that organization brought results. While black self-determination was an important goal, he acknowledged that the union's greatest challenge was to harness the dissatisfaction of white croppers, whom he saw moving closer to the SCU and its supporters. By 1934, then, SCU had "succeeded in crossing over the Alabama line into Georgia and begun to establish the union and the Communist Party." Despite this progress, however, Murphy argued that the party's next task must be the development of "leadership of local struggles on a mass basis, including the white farmers, where we see they are ready to support the Negro masses in their struggle for their rights."[32]

Murphy's conclusions must be understood as propaganda for an organization under fire, but his claims had some validity, as evidenced in a report filed by a Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) observer. In this account, the SCU was described as less a "mass movement native to the soil" than a "disciplined organization, having capable rank and file leaders who have been developed along the lines of the CP." While the report underestimated popular support for SCU, it did acknowledge the union's growing presence in west Georgia and elsewhere in the South. Estimating membership at between two and three thousand, the observer detected some SCU rank-and-file interest in the STFU, especially in the latter's strong white membership. While critical of its revolutionary dimensions, the report expressed grudging admiration for the SCU's "natural" and "able" leaders, who were intensely class-conscious. Its author concluded that "it would be a mistake to say that the SCU is not a strong factor locally."[33]

The STFU analysis reflected the views of an organization that competed with SCU for support, though the Socialist-leaning group was not a major factor in the organizational struggles of Alabama and Georgia. Established in Arkansas in 1934, STFU worked to emphasize union consciousness and minimize ideology as it organized tenants, small farmers, and sharecroppers for practical action on the ground. Among its membership were several former members of the Industrial Workers of the World or the older Working Class Union, whose presence established continuity with the tradition of southern agrarian radicalism. As active Socialists, its early leaders, including H. L. Mitchell and Clay East, predictably stressed labor action as the main front in the farmer's battle for survival. By 1935, SCU and STFU were exploring common interests that might lead toward merger or other forms of collaboration, so the report may be understood as a tentative initiative in a possible rapprochement. Although the crafty Mitchell would ultimately succeed in preventing a merger, the perception of common interest was real in 1935.[34]

At this moment, SCU was actively cultivating a closer relationship with the tenant farmers union, which it recognized as a potential ally. Together with its increasing contacts with the Farmers Union in Alabama, these overtures toward STFU revealed that SCU was anxious to unite the efforts of farm laborers in the South for more effective and sweeping collective action. These gestures were fully consistent with the emerging Popular Front now embraced by the organization's sponsor. The scope of the SCU appeal in Georgia was limited but filled with promise, and there can be little doubt that some of west Georgia's African American sharecroppers and tenants had heard the gospel according to the Share Croppers Union. Before long, the drive toward unity would be put to the test.

The Great Upheaval

A New Labor Activism, Jobless Workers, and Families in Crisis, 1933–1934

While the Communist Party had made inroads among the inhabitants of Georgia's underclass, the program of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal soon altered the context in which community organizing and unemployed activism took place. Raising a sharp challenge to southern traditions of racial preferences, the administration's program of federalizing both work programs and direct relief offered new opportunities for the unemployed to make claims on the government and the power structure that controlled the state's economic and political system. As a result, Georgia workers increasingly looked to Washington for solutions to deeply ingrained economic problems, taking their first steps toward a dramatic change in long-established concepts of local authority and states' rights. Side by side with the growing federal presence in Georgia, a more diverse array of political organizations and voluntary associations, including the NAACP, Urban League, CIC, Socialists, and AFL, competed with the activist Communist Party for the loyalties of the unemployed. Although jobless workers mobilized as never before to demand that their needs be met by state and local officials as well as powerful employers, the local ruling elite resisted change in an effort to preserve their vision of the Georgia way of life. The struggle that followed would end in mixed results at best for the victims of capitalism's systemic failure.

Particularly unwelcome in Georgia were the New Dealers, especially the federal officials who descended upon the state to investigate the relief crisis and organize the federal effort on behalf of the needy. Before long,

Governor Eugene Talmadge was to clash with the federal bureaucracy, but at the outset he cooperated in a reorganization of the state's relief system by approving FERA administrator Harry Hopkins's proposal to place Gay Shepperson, director of the Georgia Department of Welfare, in charge of relief administration in the state as head of the Georgia Emergency Relief Administration (GERA). Although subject to the advisory control of the Georgia Relief Commission (GRC), Shepperson was the effective head of the FERA effort in Georgia, initially with the consent of the state's erratic governor. What she confronted was a state with poorly developed local relief facilities; indeed, in eleven counties no relief organizations had ever been established. A fiery and determined public servant, Shepperson succeeded in organizing a statewide delivery system that won the early approval of FERA Southeastern Field Representative Alan Johnstone, who was soon to become her ally in an ongoing struggle with the governor's office over relief policy. In September 1933, Johnstone observed that the state organization was "better than [he] thought possible to secure," though in need of further "building" and "interpreting," a job he found Shepperson "perfectly capable of doing."[1]

Nonetheless, Johnstone assumed that the "odds against her were serious," which was a reference to the obstructionism mounted by Talmadge. An early indication of the governor's stance came in a public debate with Johnstone, in which Talmadge asserted that relief recipients were "bums and loafers" and that the 30 cents minimum wage rule was "a great mistake." Johnstone also reported accurately that Talmadge insisted that farmers receive help, but that "people in the cities are chiseling." Assuring Hopkins that the very mention of Roosevelt's name in Georgia "produces great enthusiasm," he argued that it was "literally necessary to take the State of Georgia away from Talmadge on the question of relief." By November, the transfer had been accomplished, and Johnstone allowed himself to believe that the relief crisis in Georgia had passed, since the governor conferred regularly with Shepperson and the "irritation by false rumors [was] vanishing" as Talmadge gained confidence in her work.[2] In time the optimism was to wane, but in the short run immediate problems took priority.

As early as July, jobless workers were organizing to resist dilatory local officials who delayed implementation of federal policies. In Savannah, a budding organization of the unemployed wrote President Roosevelt to complain about relief officials who, they claimed, did not "administer the relief work in harmony with [his] good intentions." While they perceived devious goals on the part of local administrators, most were "afraid to say something for fear of being altogether cut off from what little work

they now get." In view of this obstructionism, the Savannah dissidents urged Roosevelt to "bring pressure to bear on the people responsible for all such injustices" and initiate a "thorough investigation" of Chatham County relief abuses. In a companion letter to Georgia congressman Homer C. Parker and a petition addressed to Savannah mayor Thomas Gamble, the jobless workers demanded more work and attacked favoritism in the hiring of relief administrators. The group's leader, Frederic Chiselbrook, angrily told Parker that he "[did] not consider this relief work as charity." Because the destitute were unemployed through no fault of their own, he argued, they were entitled to publicly supported employment. Moreover, the protestors insisted that within administrative ranks, there "ought to be a few persons of the ranks of the unemployed who know how it feels to suffer."[3] There was in the words of the petitioners an unmistakable assumption of entitlement, a product of hard times as well as new federal policies based on a philosophy of work.

Similar complaints came in from other outlying areas, including Fitzgerald, Roberta, and Augusta, all expressing dissatisfaction with conservative relief authorities who kept a tight hold on the public purse. In these cases, workers struggled to create local organizations through which the corporate body of the unemployed could speak to authority. The jobless identified a problem that was to plague federal job programming throughout the Depression years: namely, cost-conscious local authorities who often dragged their feet on providing matching money for federal programs. In each community, desperate relief recipients implored FERA's Harry Hopkins and NRA's Hugh Johnson to launch an investigation into resistance to work relief expenditures on the part of public officials who seemed to care little about the plight of the unemployed.[4]

While feeble and uncoordinated efforts at organization were under way in Georgia's more isolated communities, it was in urban Fulton County and Atlanta that the voices of the jobless became more shrill and forced local authorities to confront the economic realities. Here more than in any other area of the state, the racial dimension of hard times was evident in the diagnosis of the problem, prescriptions advanced, and impact of federal programs. Almost immediately, African American workers were confronted with serious employment problems. Social worker Wilma Van Dusseldorp, who headed the Fulton County Relief Commission, later recalled that black yard workers and domestic help were among the first people to be unemployed when white incomes were reduced or removed. Likewise, the Atlanta Urban League's executive secretary, Reginald Johnson, observed in July 1933 that African American telegraph messengers, office workers, railroad firemen, porters, and other workers were being

systematically laid off. He warned that it was important to "watch the effect of the [NRA] Industrial Recovery Code as it [became] effective" and suggested that the codes might have to include provisions stating that "as men are either laid off or re-employed, those who are employed or re-employed be of the same racial group as those who formerly held the positions."[5]

While the New Deal forced recalcitrant Georgia politicians to give lip service to wage equalization on relief projects, discrimination persisted, resulting in the further displacement of black workers. Sociologist Arthur Raper argued that the NRA performance presented a "spotted picture," which meant black displacement in some communities and employment in others. He reported that among African Americans NRA came to mean "Negroes Rarely Around" or "Negro Removal Act," while one white observer called it the "Negro Relief Act." What is clear is the result of New Deal pressure. Over the objections of local officials, the Fulton County Relief Commission forced the implementation of liberalized family allowances and broader case loads that resulted in an increase from 9,000 families in September 1933 to 29,000 by January 1, more than half of them black.[6]

This expanded coverage was in part a result of federal standards but also reflected rising militancy in the Atlanta African American community during the summer of 1933. At a mass meeting at Wheat Street Baptist Church under the leadership of Rev. J. R. Henderson, 2,000 black Atlantans adopted resolutions attacking NRA discrimination as "deplorable" and urged employers to be fair in implementing the codes so that African Americans would be "included in and not left out of NRA." Another purpose of this gathering was to amass evidence documenting the displacement of black workers in Atlanta, which proved to be a widespread phenomenon. The rhetorical display at this gathering demonstrated that black community leaders were well aware of the New Deal's potential for forcing social change. Wheat Street Baptist's Pastor Faulkner confidently told the crowd that "all Atlanta relief is now under federal charge." Similarly, Raper asserted that finally, "somebody in Washington has something to say about how money is spent in Atlanta." One day later, the *Atlanta Daily World* proclaimed that Atlanta's African American community, including church leaders, professionals, the Atlanta Urban League, and the Atlanta Negro Chamber of Commerce, refused to accept NRA wage differentials based on race. Not long thereafter, the editorial voice of the black community endorsed NRA with "enthusiasm undiminished,"[7] while attacking code chiselers. Black support for a flawed federal

program underscored the paradox of the New Deal for the Atlanta African American community.

Even more welcome than NRA was the Roosevelt administration's creation of the Civil Works Administration (CWA) in late 1933. Local African American leaders were especially encouraged by Shepperson's decision to open an Auburn Avenue headquarters, which was intended to facilitate registration by Atlanta's black unemployed. Likewise, the Georgia Federation of Labor (GFL) welcomed the new program, which more closely approximated labor's "idea of public relief" than any previous program. J. Sid Teller, president of the GFL, lauded the Roosevelt administration for "pouring money in . . . at the bottom," as well as its decision to create a "national program" with a nationwide wage scale. While Governor Talmadge denounced the 40 cent hourly rate, the GFL embraced the CWA scale as appropriate for a national emergency program that "seem[ed] to be working." The Federation's *Journal of Labor* endorsed the new program, noting that no business or government program had been "so generally and promptly felt as has the CWA program."[8] Labor's embrace of job relief revealed the nationalizing and federalizing impact of the New Deal on Georgia workers and their organizational representatives.

Equally enthusiastic about CWA, but for dramatically different reasons, was the Communist Party, which had struggled in Atlanta since the imprisonment of Angelo Herndon. At the national level, the party had long viewed the unemployed movement as a crucial wedge that might be used to broaden the party base. Consequently, in December 1933 the party's theoretical journal, *Party Organizer*, exhorted activists to use CWA as a "means for reaching and organizing large bodies of workers for militant struggle." In the same issue of *Party Organizer* an open letter warned Communists against excessive concentration on factory organization. While carrying on the task of mobilizing employed workers, this activity did not "in any way mean that [the party] should allow [its] work among the unemployed to slacken."[9]

In Georgia, Communist Party progress was limited, though growing. While paid-up members of the Unemployed Councils were few in number, the party was an active force in protesting police brutality in Atlanta, where Socialist Mary R. Millis expressed concern about police-community relations. In response to her prodding, the CIC moved in November 1933 to initiate a program of sensitivity training for police officers. Equally important was the collapse of the Atlanta Six prosecutions, which Arthur Raper saw as evidence that the "general hysteria [had] died down."[10]

Raper's early optimism was misplaced. Deeply enmeshed in the Herndon defense, Ben Davis bluntly accused the Georgia courts of "collusion with the Ku Klux Klan" and insisted that their attention be "turned against the white lynchers." Davis again defied the system in 1933 by demanding the prosecution of a white police officer accused of murdering blind African American Glover Davis. This incident revealed the tight linkage between the Herndon defense and Communist determination to employ public protest and mass action to highlight police brutality and build support for the party. Glover Davis had been killed in cold blood by Patrolman O. W. Allen, who claimed that the blind man had attacked him with an ice pick. Preposterous on its face, this argument helped bring the *Atlanta Daily World*, Urban League, black churches, ILD, and the victim's family together in support of a "visible protest" through a "mass protest funeral" that would dramatize the need for police reform in Atlanta. When it occurred, the funeral drew criticism from the police, who blocked white attendance but failed to prevent thousands of mourners from registering their public dissent against official violence toward Atlanta African Americans. To the *Southern Worker*, the event demonstrated that black and white workers were "more and more realizing the necessity of united action." While Patrolman Allen's actions were eventually ratified by a verdict of justifiable homicide, the incident was significant not only as an illustration of ILD–Communist Party cooperation with liberal organizations in the fight for racial justice, but also as one of the few times a southern white police officer was charged for the murder of a black citizen.[11]

So aggressive was the black legal activist Ben Davis that following the mass demonstration at the victim's funeral, Solicitor Hudson brought charges against him before the Atlanta Bar Association in an attempt to muzzle the local voice of the ILD. When he moved to New York in June 1934 to edit the *Negro Liberator*, Davis was determined to use the publication to keep the pressure on Georgia authorities in the fight to free Angelo Herndon. It was not long after his arrival in New York that a delegation of liberals led by Communist playwright John Howard Lawson visited both Herndon and Talmadge in an effort to build publicity pertaining to Georgia's attack on the black unemployed organizer. Lawson reported that Talmadge was "cordial and friendly," though he insisted that the case "was not within his jurisdiction." Even more amazing was the governor's pledge that "a pardon would be considered at the proper time." Especially angered by the suppression of Communist literature as a civil liberties violation, the New York liberals demanded Herndon's release on bail and insisted on the protection of free speech.

Lawson disingenuously claimed that "there [was] not a communist among [them]" and insisted that the group was driven by the conviction that "it [was] a dangerous thing to suppress free speech among the people of any nation." One month later, the ILD and renamed Unemployment Council announced that $15,000 had been raised for Herndon's bail, and that the leader in the fight for "better relief standards" was free.[12]

Meanwhile, the Communist Party's commitment on the unemployment issue deepened. Following Herndon's conviction, young Clyde Johnson came into Atlanta to assume leadership in the organization of the unemployed. Under the direction of party section leader Don West and his lieutenant, Johnson, several successful strikes on federal work relief projects were held. Typically, the key issues involved work rules and job assignment, which were the only issues CWA regarded as subject to bargaining, since wages were legislatively determined. In some cases, threatened cutoffs in relief funds produced spontaneous walkouts, sometimes under Unemployed Council auspices and on other occasions with little direction. Johnson later recalled that welfare cuts were sometimes restored quickly once rumors of strike actions began to circulate. Under mass pressure, officials worked to settle these disturbances promptly, simultaneously intensifying the attack on party organizers such as Johnson, whose photographic image was widely distributed by the Atlanta police. Like West, Johnson was now caught up in the dragnet associated with Solicitor Hudson's ongoing antiradical campaign, climaxing with the Red Scare of 1934.[13]

While Communist activists West and Johnson provided badly needed leadership in unemployed organizing, they were also successful in mobilizing strong local support in the African American community and building a solid core group of about a dozen white workers from Atlanta's Fulton Bag Mill. Among the white participants, women were especially active, including Communist firebrands Nannie Leah Washburn and Annie May Leathers. Washburn was a seasoned veteran of Atlanta's unemployed movement who was an ardent admirer of Angelo Herndon, the catalyst for the 1932 demonstration. Washburn later described herself as "very active" in "trying to organize Fulton Bag" by "putting out the *Daily Worker* and going into their homes and knocking on the doors and talking to them and making friends." She saw Angelo Herndon as the crucial leader who, more than any other activist, had forged an interracial link, thus creating a bond that revealed that "the blacks was just like us poor whites."[14]

To complement the white activists, black support for the unemployed movement and its leader, Angelo Herndon, remained rock solid, despite

increasing official harassment. The watchful eye of Atlanta's law enforcement monitors made it "very difficult to work in Atlanta at that time," at least for well-known radicals like West and Johnson. West later asserted that the city police blanketed the African American community, devoting special attention to "anybody who undertook to do anything for the benefit of black people." Strict discipline was essential to the success of unemployed organizers and the Herndon defense committee, which necessitated word-of-mouth notification of meetings in private homes. For the Herndon committee, West argued, self-discipline was crucial because "people's freedom depended on it—sometimes people's lives."[15] Before long, West's unabashed radicalism began to make his work in Atlanta more dangerous. His work with the Communist Party's Unemployed Councils and open assistance to workers on PWA and CWA work projects exposed him to surveillance and increasing harassment. On several occasions, he narrowly missed apprehension when worker homes, black and white, were targeted in surprise raids; one such episode ended with West escaping through a rear window into the woods just ahead of the law. Similarly, Clyde Johnson became a hunted man, and soon police began "going to the homes of members and asking for [him]," inquiring about party activities. Due to the party's aggressive tactics and heightened militancy among displaced workers, especially African Americans, widespread suspicions of violent revolutionary activity and intensified racial tension combined to stretch police-community relations to the limit. Consequently, the viability of activists like West and Johnson as radical organizers deteriorated rapidly. As police harassment escalated in 1934, often justified as enforcement of segregation statutes, both narrowly averted arrest. By May, West had become the primary target of a sweeping search, intended to undercut both unemployed organizing and the Herndon defense.[16]

After the Georgia Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision in the Herndon case, the pressure on West intensified. Reassured of judicial backing, Atlanta's Assistant Solicitor John Hudson forged ahead with a new "reign of terror" featuring invasions of privacy and attacks on ILD offices in the working-class community. Facing charges of "inciting to insurrections," West went underground, but the heat was on. While he managed to avoid arrest, the radical leader found it "hard to go through a working class neighborhood because on every corner a cop or a detective was stationed." West argued that the police dragnet was intended to apprehend him "dead or alive" in an attempt to "burn Communism out of Georgia." After consultation with local supporters, party activists, and the Herndon Committee, Don West slipped out of Georgia in what

the *Daily Worker* applauded as a successful "fade away." After working for the Herndon defense in New York, he was soon to surface in August as Communist Party labor organizer in North Carolina. Also on the run, Clyde Johnson found refuge in Birmingham, where the party base was stronger.[17]

Before the party reassigned him to work in Alabama, however, Johnson's prominence as an unemployed organizer resulted in a detour to Rome, Georgia, where foundry workers were on strike over wage issues and union recognition at the Southern Cooperative Foundry. While the Hanks Stove and Range Company workers accepted a wage reduction for a return to work, the Southern Cooperative workers, led by the fiery Jesse Perrien and Emmett Park, maintained solidarity in resistance. Spurning the recommendation of the AFL Iron Molders Union, the strikers refused to return to work at a reduced rate of pay, which they regarded as a "sell-out" capitulation to an unsympathetic National Labor Board, the police, and a collaborationist union. With few friends inside or outside the state labor movement, the rebellious Southern Cooperative Foundry workers were predisposed to defy the AFL bureaucrats and listen to the Communist argument for class unity based on solidarity among employed and unemployed workers. Johnson later recalled that his reputation followed him, in that the strikers "associated [his] dealing with the Unemployed Councils with the strike," including the idea of "things becoming better for the guys who were fighting." He circulated both the *Daily Worker* and *Labor Unity*, for which he had written an article on the Rome strike. In Johnson's account, the strikers "were wild to see this nice slick magazine with their strike on the front, talking about it on the front page." The militant facade was of little use to the foundry workers, many of whom found themselves jobless or demoted as a consequence of an unsuccessful strike in a nonunion district. And eventually, grievances from the Southern Cooperative Foundry were dismissed by a regional labor board that could only offer suggestions while acknowledging that it had "no authority to change any part of the contract."[18]

While the Communist Party labored mightily to arouse dissatisfaction on government projects, such as CWA, the evidence indicates that most Georgians greeted the Roosevelt program with great enthusiasm. Reporting to Harry Hopkins in Washington, roving reporter Lorena Hickok insisted that CWA was "very popular" in the state, though some landowners worried about the high wage rate. In Atlanta, the program was considered a "grand business," and "they all yell for more jobs," not realizing that CWA could not "go on forever." Some critics were convinced that the government wage rate would mean that farmers could not compete, but

federal official Malcolm Miller observed that perhaps the policy's impact would be to end the South's long reputation as "the sweatshop of the nation." Despite the competitive wages, most landowners accepted the program because CWA had not really removed unemployment in Georgia, which meant that the labor supply remained adequate. Moreover, some planters realized that CWA employment reduced the number of tenants they would otherwise have to support. Hickok also noted that most of them dismissed Talmadge's critical "attitude on CWA," which was unpopular with landowners and even "less successful" with tenants and farm laborers, the main beneficiaries of the federal work relief effort. Planter enthusiasm was even more remarkable, she argued, in view of the high wages being paid to African Americans, a sharp departure from accepted southern practices. Because of a "darned serious SURPLUS of farm labor," rural employers continued to get labor for "almost nothing." In the final analysis, Hickok concluded:

> By some means or other, these people have got to be removed from the labor market in Georgia. Then—and only then . . . will farm labor get any sort of break in this state. Then—and only then—will the situation where half-starved whites and blacks struggle in competition for less to eat than my dog gets at home, for the privilege of living in huts that are infinitely less comfortable than his kennel [be changed].

She agreed with Gay Shepperson that the answer could lie in the widespread adoption of a subsistence farm program that would divert the money spent on CWA into such projects while extricating the federal government from the "relief business in rural Georgia" and contributing something toward a solution of the state's labor problem.[19]

Hickok's reaction to the dire poverty found in rural northeast and south Georgia differed from her endorsement of ongoing aid for urban areas like Atlanta. Recognizing that sooner or later, CWA funding must end, she also transmitted to Hopkins the warning she had heard throughout the state: "for God's sake, don't do it unless you have something to take its place." Typical was a "drawling sort of 'pep meeting'" for CWA she encountered in a "dusty little town called Odum," not far from Savannah, where one storekeeper assured her that "if it hadn't been for CWA, he "woulda gone clean under." In rural Moultrie, she heard that despite cuts in hours, most people felt that "it's a whole lot better than being laid off" because they would "rather work for $3 a week than be laid off." Even after press reports warned that CWA would end in May, many Georgians believed them to be trial balloons.[20]

Yet not all citizens were compliant. A few days earlier in Carnesville in northeast Georgia, for example, 1,800 registered workers had exerted extreme pressure on relief officials after learning that they would not be offered employment. Incensed by their diminishing prospects, the unemployed reportedly "threatened to riot and burn trucks and sack the CWA offices." Likewise, in La Grange, police protection was required at the CWA offices to guard against a threatened assault by unemployed applicants. While Hickok's report suggested that significant disorderly behavior was to be found in Georgia's rural areas, her impressions reflected the disproportionate amount of time she spent in remote locations. In reality, the Communist Party was working more actively in urban communities, especially Atlanta, to organize the jobless in a drive for increased CWA employment opportunity. Here the party-sponsored National Student League (NSL) attacked relief authorities for their policy of ignoring the single unemployed, except for the effort to send them into the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) "to be trained for war." Unnamed radical students in the Atlanta NSL argued that because the same officials who denied relief to the hungry controlled the courts that persecuted Angelo Herndon, the only solution was united protest among workers, students, and intellectuals to demand freedom for the city's most celebrated political prisoner. In a strident broadside, the ad hoc student group called for a petition and resolution campaign to exert further pressure on Talmadge and the authorities. Focusing on the Herndon case, the Atlanta NSL activists denounced discrimination against black youth in particular, a charge that lent greater urgency to the plight of the imprisoned unemployed leader, whose cause had become a powerful symbol for the unsatisfied demands of the jobless.[21]

Of greater concern to Georgia authorities were the mass meetings occurring throughout the state in early 1934, in most cases decrying threatened cuts in Civil Works Administration (CWA) job programs. In most communities, few workers or officials seem to have understood that the Roosevelt administration intended this work relief program to be a stopgap measure to create immediate short-term employment at a critical moment in the early New Deal's development, rather than the more stable employment provided by the Public Works Administration (PWA) in cooperation with private contractors. In such diverse locations as Quitman, Atlanta, Fayetteville, Dublin, Telfair, Decatur, and Vienna, attendees at spontaneous meetings called on the administration to allocate more CWA jobs and funds for communities in which the relief load was onerous. The typical tactic was for large citizen groups to assemble, adopt resolutions,

sign petitions, and call on local community organizations to support their demands for action. From McRae in Telfair County, for example, came a petition arguing that if CWA work stopped "a very desperate condition [would] prevail among [the] people." Equally urgent was a plea from fifty Dublin workers who insisted that if CWA employment came to an end, they would "be left in a helpless condition without any jobs or any means of support, as the farms [had] all been taken up in this section." Likewise, the Quitman Chamber of Commerce enthusiastically endorsed a similar demand, while Vienna's farmers and citizens assured CWA officials that further project employment "in no way interfered with farm labor," nor would it do so in the future. Like-minded petitioners in Henry County called on Senator Richard Russell to pressure the administration for increased allocations for Georgia, in view of the state's urgent need for relief. And after a meeting of unemployed citizens in Americus, a local mayor's committee added its support for increased job allocations, arguing as did many other such groups that its locality was discriminated against.[22] The wave of citizens' meetings and organized protests confirmed the near universal enthusiasm for the CWA program that Hickok had observed in her evaluation of the state situation; it also revealed the potential for mass mobilization among destitute workers should their appeals to their leaders go unheard.

Despite the plaintive appeals, it soon became clear that the popular program would come to an end before long. Hoping to stave off the inevitable adjustment, some community groups pleaded their cases for exceptional treatment, most without results. In McCrae in Telfair County, for example, petitioners complained of "deferred starvation" on direct relief as a result of excessively "rapid demobilization" of CWA workers; they insisted that "too rapid demobilization had cut loose workers for whom there was simply no other work available." Yet no amount of special pleading could halt the termination of CWA, which was accomplished, according to women's supervisor Jane Van de Vrede, "as painlessly as possible for all concerned." CWA's tactic for handling unrest was to carry over more than five hundred projects to FERA funding, which led most discharged workers to accept their release with what Van de Vrede regarded as "a splendid spirit of understanding."[23]

For some Georgians, the program's termination concealed some features that had not been so benign. As Karen Ferguson has shown, the program continued to uphold racial differences and often left African Americans at a disadvantage, both in terms of job assignment and wage rate. In Atlanta, where the Communist Party had developed a small but fiercely committed base, party organizers attacked CWA officials for their

systematic removal of black clients in favor of white workers, as well as favoritism in the assignment of the jobless to CCC. One party functionary complained that Fulton County relief officials held "private meetings" with the white unemployed in the face of a "growing unrest among the masses," intended to give preference to whites in job assignment.[24] Black Communists were not much different than white organizations in demanding the extension of the program, but they were clearly more sensitive to racialized local administration of the CWA program.

In some situations, NAACP embraced the complaints of the black unemployed. In Albany, after complaints of verbal and physical abuse reached Washington, federal officials promised action if proof could be presented. The organization's local leaders charged that workers were forced to pay their own transportation costs and were often compelled to work without compensation. Worse yet, the NAACP complained, the jobless were threatened with guns, "kicked, slapped, and otherwise abused."[25] Once they were able to support the claims with sworn affidavits, federal authorities referred the issue to state officials, but there is no evidence that state action was taken to remedy the problem. In any event, by the time the complaint resulted in a response, CWA was already on the way out.

At this time, one coastal Georgia trouble spot was Savannah, where African Americans outnumbered a defensive white community. Reporting on the local situation, Hickok told Hopkins that she sensed fear among whites that manifested itself in disgruntlement over the disproportionate number of blacks on CWA due to reliance on the relief rolls, not to mention the widely held assumption that nonresidents were swelling the black contingent in the program. She attributed the irrational response to a poisonous blend of racism and politics. Not surprisingly, the Communist Party was active in Savannah, compiling affidavits of the many workers who were being laid off in the summer of 1934. In party farm organizer Lem Harris's files were contemporary statements testifying to the deleterious effects of the layoffs. Former soldier John Galloway, for example, complained that he had been out of work since CWA cut him off in April and had been "unable to get any work since" and had no provisions and "no clothes, shoes are any thing" [*sic*]. And "cut off since March," Launey Sheppard had "been back to the relief several times since to try [to] get back on but could not[;] they keep telling me to come back until at last told me that it would not be any use for me to come back that they could not help me any more unless something started again like the CWA. That was poor satisfaction to give a man." Unsuccessful applicant S. C. Alderman summarized local relief workers' views with the pithy observation that he "consider[ed] the management

here not doing their patriotic duty." Common to worker complaints was the assertion that local relief officials and social workers, many of them middle-class political appointees, had stalled on assignments or dropped clients from the relief rolls when they refused farm work at wages below the CWA standard. Beneath the unease was a growing recognition that CWA was stimulating the modernization of the South by hiring black farm labor, thereby disrupting the timeworn system of dependency based on the exploitation of tenants and sharecroppers.[26]

Despite local qualms over this social intervention, the CWA program was widely approved and had a positive impact on the intractable unemployment crisis facing Georgia's communities. While there were still 10,000 persons statewide in need of employment when the program ended, the direct relief load had been cut in half as the jobless enthusiastically embraced work relief. Georgia's relief bureaucrats also congratulated themselves on smooth labor relations, which, in Shepperson's not unbiased view, were "marked by pleasant associations all through the program" and the ready adjustment of what state officials viewed as "minor grievances." The agency's internal history acknowledged that no grievance committees had been created in Georgia "because there was no necessity for them and all disputes were easily and amicably settled." Finally, it concluded that overall the ability to pay a "living wage" was "wholesome," a perspective not borne out by the Savannah testimony.[27] The official analysis overstated class harmony, while it failed to adequately consider the powerlessness of unorganized and dependent workers. Despite the agency's sunny report, the sporadic protests of 1933–34 suggested underlying tensions ready to explode under extreme pressure.

The absence of workable grievance machinery reflected the limited engagement of the American Federation of Labor in resolving the problems of the unemployed on the job. The GFL's measured involvement with the jobless reflected an internal struggle within the national AFL with regard to the organization of the unemployed. President William Green was slow to embrace the concept of unemployment insurance, and AFL vacillated on the concept of organizational activity. In 1933, the *American Federationist* proposed that central labor unions "serve as the advocate of the unemployed," because the trade union movement's scope must be "larger than just [the] union group." In contrast, some member unions argued that there was no provision in the Federation's laws allowing it to issue charters to unemployed workers, which meant that their organizational efforts would not reach the jobless. Since most unemployed workers lacked skills, this viewpoint made sense to unionists whose organizations shared a craft orientation. To the International Brotherhood

of Paper Makers, for example, the proper approach to the problem of joblessness was to establish shorter hours and better wages for employed workers, thus spreading the available work. Nonetheless, the Paper Makers did urge local unions to "contact unemployed workers and address their meetings to stimulate their interest in and win their support of trade union policies."[28]

While international unions argued among themselves, Georgia labor leaders adopted a middle-road approach by working through the existing relief and welfare bureaucracy to aid the unemployed. The key figure in the state initiative was Georgia Federation of Labor president A. Steve Nance, who represented labor on the NRA Compliance Board, the National Labor Relations Board, and the Georgia Relief Commission. Although he was probably the most liberal member of the GRC, his ties with the conservative element in the Georgia trade union movement made him seem a "safe" appointee in 1933 and 1934.

While Nance "never repudiated the craft movement," he did see that "the rank and file had to be organized on different lines and his concern for the wider movement . . . grew and deepened," a trend that would climax when he later moved into the Congress on Industrial Organizations (CIO). Gay Shepperson was impressed with his "taking time to come to relief agencies in behalf of people who could never be organized and who had no political influence—the old, sick, and little children." In 1934, however, when FERA director Harry Hopkins placed Shepperson in sole control of the CWA program, thus eliminating the involvement of GRC, Nance asserted that he was not disappointed to be relieved of a duty that had "brought [him] nothing but abuse and grief." While his work on the NRA board brought him the censure of the Georgia Trade Association, arguably the state's most prominent business association, for his "labor activities," NRA district manager William L. Mitchell maintained that Nance was "fair and reasonable." At the time of Nance's premature death in 1937, Shepperson recalled that he "always found time to serve in social work."[29] His active involvement in the administration of relief policy, while carried on within mainstream channels, distinguished him from more timid labor chieftains, including those in control of AFL policy in Washington.

Although Nance worked to assist the jobless in their relations with the Georgia relief bureaucracy, he was always conscious of the primary interests of the AFL and building trades unions, whose leaders consistently focused on protection for the skilled workforce. The first battle line was drawn in connection with wage levels on PWA projects. The Public Works Administration was the administration's initial work relief

program, operated in cooperation with private enterprise and based on public works projects and cash remuneration for workers. Wages were to be set at the minimum union scale in the communities where work was undertaken, a wage level that came to be known as the "prevailing wage." This principle satisfied the building trades unions but sometimes led to local controversy over the appropriate scale. In April and May 1934, for example, the Georgia Federation of Labor complained to AFL president William Green that PWA policy on work assignment endangered the position of skilled workers in rural areas of the state, due to the agency's requirement that local labor be used on all work sites. The practical result was that in rural, small-town communities the absence of sufficient skilled workers meant that many such projects would rely on nonunion labor. Green could only reassure the GFL that it would urge the amendment of the relevant legislation to resolve the problem. Still frustrated, the Atlanta Building Trades Council urged that at minimum, skilled and unskilled workers be separated and that skilled labor qualify for a higher wage, even if the laborer was not on the relief rolls. What the unionists saw as a policy of open shop was "absolutely contrary to the principles customarily pursued [in Atlanta] by the labor movement."[30] While the federal authorities appreciated organized labor's cooperation in pursuing Work Division projects, established government policy made it impossible to comply fully with union demands.

The issue that most frequently attracted the attention of the Georgia Federation involved the simple maintenance of prevailing wages on local relief projects. In September 1934 the Gainesville Bricklayer's union protested FERA's undercutting the prevailing rate on construction projects in Clarkesville and Monroe. As a result, Shepperson ordered an investigation and remedial action if the charges could be sustained by the facts. When it was revealed that only two of the workers were union bricklayers, the union agreed to grant its members permission to work for the lower wage. Similar concerns were expressed by the Waycross Central Labor Union, which objected to the local relief officials paying wages well below the prevailing rate. In this instance, Shepperson's office assured the union that federal regulations would be followed, thus ensuring union wages where appropriate. This policy was consistent with CWA's regional rate plan, which made it possible to maintain a higher wage for skilled labor.[31]

While AFL worked assiduously to maintain prevailing wages as well as preferences for union workers, another form of organizational activity in Atlanta chipped away at the nonunion assumptions that dominated the Georgia labor market. In 1933, when FERA launched its own national

education program to provide work for unemployed teachers, a Department of Workers Education was established. With the endorsement of Mary Barker, militant organizer and leader of the Atlanta teacher's union, FERA mounted a class-conscious worker-education program guaranteed to shake the foundations of labor relations in the state's most populous community. Barker was herself a militant organizer who was determined to imbue unemployed workers from Atlanta's textile, candy, and box factories with the gospel of unionism. From the outset, she intended to help workers to "become aware of the forces that govern wages, hours, working conditions, and develop a vision of what a new order in the field of industry could be." Intent on raising worker consciousness of the economic forces that shaped their world and controlled their lives, she also insisted that women be exposed to this learning experience, which could be accomplished through the active participation of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Industrial Committee. In her view, only if all interest groups and elements in the local labor force were involved could the program "create community consciousness, develop citizenship and participation in the life of the community."[32]

From the outset, it became clear that the Workers Education Project was more than a simple educational program designed to upgrade skills. Created by the education division of FERA on orders from Washington, D.C., it was designed from the beginning to circumvent the prevailing antilabor attitudes present throughout the South. It was also carried out in close collaboration with persons dedicated to the spread of the labor movement. Its main external connection was the national Affiliated School for Workers, which fielded summer education programs for workers and contributed heavily to the Atlanta project by paying the salary of the director.[33]

The Atlanta program was organized under the direction of Tom Tippett, a New York writer and experienced labor activist with a radical history reaching back to his role in the divisive Gastonia strike of 1929. Segregated to avoid arousing local antagonism, white classes were offered at the Atlanta Federation of Trades' Labor Temple, while African Americans met at the Phyllis Wheatly YWCA and Atlanta Urban League facilities. Conditioned by experience to rely on unionism as a solution to class issues, Tippett entertained high hopes for the appeal of labor organization as a solution for all the social and racial problems that confronted any effort to promote worker solidarity in Atlanta. The foreign-born Hilton Hanna, one of his black instructors, shared this optimism, expressing the conviction that unemployed workers could easily advance their own interests by making common cause with employed workers

and passing along the insights gained in the Workers Education classroom. To Hanna the remedy for their problems was simply to "go to the labor temple and ask the labor people to help [them] . . . to get the protection they need[ed]."[34]

Tippett's enthusiasm, as well as his distinctly northern perspective, was to be found in his firm conviction that the program was successfully promoting social change in Atlanta. He was persuaded that not only was there a "real campaign to organize negroes along with white workers," but that the Workers Education classes had "done a great deal towards helping." He told his teachers that the work they had done had helped "get the people out to the labor temple and organized into unions." So aggressive was Tippett that his organizational emphasis drew the attention of Secretary Weeden of the Colored Branch of the YWCA, who maintained that the Tippett approach was too radical for the community. While Weeden denied having attacked the labor temple program, Hanna was sufficiently disturbed by her intervention to urge that any further classes at the YWCA be offered under Tippett's direct authority. The black labor activist maintained that "if classes are continued at the Y.W., it is essential that we have control of the classes." Faced by persistent local criticism, Tippett gamely maintained that the program's classes had stood for "economic and social equality for all races," which antagonized some students but inspired others who "moved with us across the Jim Crow line." While claiming substantial progress, he acknowledged that "the race question here is by far the most difficult subject to handle in the workers' educational field."[35]

And the race question would not go away. At one staff meeting, the instructor alluded to the widespread white assumption that blacks commonly allowed themselves to be used as replacement workers because they had been excluded from white unions. Unwilling to admit a breech in class solidarity, Tippett insisted that the assertion was untrue and that blacks and whites scabbed for the same reason, their economic dependency. In reality, he argued, the problem for all unemployed workers was rooted in economic exploitation, and the answer lay in the solidarity that would come with unionization. In short, "the way out of the Negro problem" was "through the trade union movement."[36]

To many observers, the promotion of interracial unity and union organization made the Workers' Education Project a "Red movement." Tippett acknowledged that to an outsider unfamiliar with the project, it might seem radical, but that it was incumbent on the staff to "make our students and ourselves understand that there is no way of improving industrial conditions unless we can first discuss them." He denied that

the movement was Red, but explained that "from the place our students were when we found them (in their thinking) our ideas are radical," and that the only approach to that problem is to "go on keeping our ideas and talking about them."[37]

Determined to press forward with a program of class action and cross-racial solidarity, Tippett appealed to George Googe of the Georgia Federation of Labor, whose support he claimed to enjoy. Googe conferred with Tippett at considerable length, reassuring him of the Georgia labor movement's support for the Workers Education Program. In a local staff meeting, Tippett later reported that Googe was "determined to organize Negroes, . . . admitting them into all unions on equal terms with other members." He also reminded his staff that Googe had publicly asserted (in the presence of Labor Secretary Frances Perkins) GFL's belief that the "only way for white unions to handle the Negro question was to organize those Negroes" and bring their wages and conditions "to the same level as white workers." Ignoring the social realities, Tippett instructed his workers to cite Googe's remarks whenever the issue came up in their class sessions, with no effort to "sugar coat our program."[38]

While Tippett's program did not revolutionize race relations, surely an unattainable goal, there is evidence that it did at least help to mobilize some African American workers, who were emboldened to join labor unions in defiance of southern social conventions. There was some progress in the trade union field, in that many students were "inspired by [the] classes to join a union." And there were occasional breakthroughs on the race issue, as evidenced by the words of one member of the plasterers' union, who argued in class that unions were the "best means of bringing the negro and white people together." He insisted that the "organizations of the working masses" could not succeed "unless those groups meet." Especially aggressive in organizing African Americans were the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Laundry Workers, and the Bricklayers. Moreover, Tippett's black lieutenant, Hilton Hanna, saw progress toward class solidarity in his students' enthusiastic discussions of issues vital to the unemployed, such as unemployment insurance and federal relief policy, after which they completed an English assignment to lobby Georgia's U.S. senators in favor of the Workers Unemployment Insurance Bill.[39]

In the last analysis, the Workers' Education Project, modest though it may have been, had raised a troublesome challenge to southern racial assumptions as it worked to politicize unemployed Atlanta workers. Not only had the program countered the area's traditional labor relations system, but more damaging to the existing relationship in the long run,

it had dared to encourage an alternative definition of race relations in which class would trump race in the struggle to raise living standards in the nation's most troubled region. Tippett maintained that "on the race question" the program "had stood in [its] classroom discussion for economic and social equality of all races." From the outset, the project had been the target of attacks by middle-class critics, suspicions on the part of social organizations interested in advancing the interests of the black underclass, and government officials fearful of rapid social change. Consequently, the Atlanta Relief Commission regularly received complaints that doomed the program when CWA went out of existence. Ironically, Weeden's sniping was an important factor in the demise of the project, criticism that Hanna perceived as an attempt to "dictate the policies of the courses." Another instructor, Prudence Arnold, reported that a more subtle discouragement was the female African Americans' fear that their involvement in classes "might endanger their jobs," which led to a significant dropout rate. Finally, one official in the FERA offices had threatened to cut off teacher salaries and send "stool pigeons" to "spy on" the program and its primary advocate, Mary Barker, an action that induced CWA authorities to assure Tippett and his staff that they did not want to "censor what the projects do." By this time, however, the program was winding down as funding ran out. In July 1934 the local Workers' Education Project ceased to function, not to resurface until another less provocative program would appear under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration in 1938. With the departure of Tom Tippett, the radical edge that had defined the workers' education movement in Atlanta disappeared, but the memory lingered on to undercut the efforts of those who sought to advance the cause of labor and the unemployed through the educational potential inherent in federal work relief programming. As Karen Ferguson has shown, Tippett's vision of worker education, labor activism, and interracial organization matched the "outsider" challenge to the status quo first raised by a militant Communist Party in Atlanta.[40] While Tippett's "insider" approach parted company with the hard-core radicals, both groups promoted social and economic changes that lay beyond the pale of southern sensibilities in the 1930s.

On the contrary, the very mention of a classless society caused southerners to "fly into a RED rage." As early as 1931 Fellowship of Reconciliation organizer Howard Kester had identified the underlying reason for the deep anticommunist sentiment found throughout the South, which was to be found in the omnipresent issue of race. To Kester, "it is not the economics of Communism that frightens the white Southerner; it is the racialism of Communism that frightens him."[41] While the context

for this observation was the poisonous atmosphere surrounding the infamous Scottsboro case, Kester's insight was directly relevant to the hostile reception given Tom Tippett and his vision of workers' education as a spur to labor organization in Georgia.

The demise of the Workers' Education Program coincided with the end of the New Deal's first attempt to alleviate the distress of jobless workers through the NRA and CWA programs. By 1935, Harry Hopkins and Franklin D. Roosevelt contemplated a much more sweeping attack on the problem of unemployment through a new program of unprecedented scope that was to embrace the philosophy of government as employer of last resort. When the WPA program charted a new course for work relief in the United States, unemployed organizers and radical activists were prepared to employ new organizations in the drive to mobilize society's discards for mass action. Before that stage in community and union activism was reached, however, another, even more dramatic challenge to southern traditions and the "Georgia way of life" would be raised by workers long believed by business managers and middle-class community leaders to be impervious to the virus of militant unionism. This new threat to southern social and economic conventions appeared when thousands of exploited workers, including a large Georgia contingent, rose in rebellion during the sweeping general textile strike of 1934. Their endorsement of militant unionism was to have a profound impact on both the future of organized labor in the state and the interests of the unemployed, whose special interests would be influenced by the outcome in ways unimaginable as the dramatic struggle unfolded.

Militant Labor

The Great Textile Strike of 1934 and the Problem of Unemployment

While the advent of New Deal social provision had stimulated a glimmer of interest in the organization of jobless workers, it was the labor innovations sparked by NRA and the new textile code that led to the most dramatic worker activism ever witnessed in the American South. The guarantees in Section 7A emboldened laborers long suppressed and encouraged Georgia workers to demand the same protections as the law provided their counterparts throughout the United States. As a result, southern industrialists and managers were confronted with a literal uprising on the part of a workforce that had historically struggled to establish its place in the southern business system and contest the paternalistic assumptions of management overlords. The worker revolt underscores the historical agency of men and women who had previously found indirect ways to establish the autonomy of their communities; but in many places, the activism of 1934 transcended these subtle expressions of independence to reach a new level of resistance. Before the struggle had subsided, Georgia workers, like others throughout the South, had staked their claim to a share of the wealth created by labor and the dignity inherent in their toil. In the process, many tasted the bitterness of defeat and the scourge of unemployment precipitated by their bold challenge to the existing system of production and compensation.

Because the key players in this struggle were employed textile workers, this analysis must necessarily focus on workers in Georgia's textile mills; as will become evident, however, unemployed workers became

important actors in the subsequent drama as pawns in the tumultuous labor-management confrontation. Moreover, as the battle wound down, employer practices created a new and vulnerable group of jobless Georgians who swelled the ranks of the state's unemployed army. The events of 1934 and 1935 would have a profound impact on the subsequent history of unionism and labor relations in the nation's most economically troubled region. So traumatic were these developments that the reality of worker rebellion eventually became lost history, a suppressed story forgotten by all but those most directly affected by management's largely successful effort to smash the union movement that threatened its vision of the southern way of economic life.

When workers began to assert their organizing and bargaining rights under NRA, several critical issues emerged to plague union efforts to promote organization. At least two addressed the status of temporarily jobless laborers: first, the debate over the striking worker's entitlement to relief funds, and second, the question of layoffs and the seniority process to be followed when poststrike rehiring ensued. Federal government policy was generally successful in resolving the relief problem, but the acrimonious disagreement over seniority and evictions was to persist throughout the contentious period of labor unrest that marked the mid-1930s in Georgia and the South. A third related problem involved management's efforts to employ replacement workers during the active strike period and the response of striking laborers to that tactic.

At an early date, federal relief policy confirmed workers' entitlement to relief benefits while exercising the right to strike under the provisions of NRA. In August 1933, Harry Hopkins made it clear that when worker resources were exhausted, strikers' families would qualify for relief assistance; moreover, relief workers were to be paid a minimum 30 cents per hour wage. An approving *Atlanta Journal of Labor* noted that the new federal policy was a "marked contrast to that of the American Red Cross and other organizations in the past." Hopkins emphatically insisted that each relief case "must be treated on its merits, wholly apart from any controversy in which the wage earner may be involved." While the business community railed against such relief payments, Georgia social workers typically assumed that strikers were "voluntarily unemployed through no fault of their own" and therefore entitled to public assistance.[1]

The willingness of unemployed workers to provide replacement labor is hard to assess because the strike's progress and impact differed from community to community. By one estimate, 44,000 of Georgia's 60,000 textile workers were off the job by the second week of the strike. In response, W. D. Anderson of the Bibb Manufacturing Company and the

Southern Cotton Textile Manufacturers' Association cooperated to hire New York strikebreaker Pearl L. Bergoff, who quickly imported 800 armed thugs to support Georgia management. In some communities, such as Macon, African Americans were brought in under police escort, some of them against their will. Employers were perfectly willing to use substitute workers from outside the state; Augusta strikers confronted imports from South Carolina, while strikebreakers from distant New Jersey appeared at the Bibb plants in Porterdale. In other instances, Georgia employers called on unemployed workers from other state communities. Atlanta mill worker Nesbitt Spinks recalled that at the Exposition Cotton Mill, picketers would "talk to people" and "try to turn people back," but that "a lot of people would go in there and go to work, looking for a job."[2] Such intervention aside, the evidence suggests that while generalization is difficult, the strike was effective for at least two weeks in most locations, especially in larger mills.

Competition from unemployed laborers was sometimes an issue, but a greater long-term concern for union workers lay in the thorny issue of seniority in rehiring following labor disputes. Management had long exercised the right to establish priority among workers seeking reemployment, which had weakened labor's attempts to mobilize the workforce due to the fear of retaliation against strikers, but the establishment of NRA's regional labor boards now offered employees a review body that promised more equitable decisions on seniority issues. Or so it seemed. Before long, it became clear that a board decision and company compliance were entirely separate matters. At such plants as the Dalton Silk Hosiery Mills, Rome Hosiery Mills, Tubize-Chatellon Corp., and the Garwood Manufacturing Co. of Winder, management soon reasserted its arbitrary policies with regard to rehiring, often discriminating against union workers. Fulton Bag worker Marion Brown maintained that "they culled them out of there, one by one," usually "find[ing] something wrong with your work. . . . Didn't have a chance . . . there was a lot of them fellers worked in cotton mills for years that couldn't get another job." In these cases regional review boards urged arbitration and rehiring according to seniority, but management stubbornly insisted on its prerogatives, which set the stage for further discontent. Referring to a "serious strike" in Augusta, the GFL's A. Steve Nance urged Harry Hopkins to insist that the Regional Board in Atlanta take a more active role to handle the "textile troubles" that had developed because the "mediation machinery" in the industry had "collapsed." Only forthright action by the Regional Board, he argued, could head off "strikes which will involve many thousand workers."[3]

In reality, labor organizers in Georgia faced a nearly insurmountable challenge in 1934. Even dedicated radicals acknowledged in February 1934 that workers had "only recently begun to build up a real movement, both among the AFL and among the unemployed." In the wake of a series of failures in labor organizing, including earlier Communist activity in the now stalemated Iron Molders strike in Rome, the Communist Party maintained a brave front; but the prospects for early success were slim indeed. Still, a few bold souls defied the trend with public declarations of radicalism. It was in 1934, for example, that Nannie Leah Washburn joined the Communist Party because she "didn't want to be a-livin in starvation and—millions of people with worlds of money."[4] Her commitment was exceptional, however; as most scholars of Georgia labor have argued, there was very little foundation on which to build a lasting union movement in 1934. Outside of Columbus and Augusta, near the state lines, and Macon in south central Georgia, few locals had emerged before the general textile strike of that year. Elsewhere, it was difficult to assess union growth, though it is clear that some workers had enlisted in labor's cause in both Dalton and Rome in northwest Georgia, while others stood watching from the sidelines as labor's great struggle took shape.[5] With few mills effectively organized and an absence of trained leaders, there was a heightened threat of violence, especially in view of management intransigence. In May 1934, the Atlanta Regional Labor Board reported to the National Labor Board in Washington that "extensive and serious trouble [was] pending" at textile mills in Columbus, Porterdale, Scotdale, Newnan, and Atlanta. The Atlanta situation was particularly grave because Communists had allegedly interfered with "regular labor organization," while management "refused to negotiate contracts of any kind." To further complicate matters, there was "very decided resentment in this section against the various state and national textile boards," which from the union perspective were "not functioning at all."[6]

By August 1934, textile workers' frustration with the inability of the National Textile Board to move management toward compliance with NRA codes and regional Review Board recommendations had reached a critical juncture. Time and again, Georgia union workers were assured that their complaints were being processed, but to no avail, as management cavalierly ignored the decisions of the board. A review of 3,794 complaints from twenty-nine states received by the Textile Labor Relations Board as of August 6, 1934, reveals that 831 were filed by Georgia workers, second only to North Carolina's 1,029. Increasingly militant workers now questioned the efficacy of the NRA process. One Rome

worker angrily asked where the union could "get lawful action when the NRA law is violated," claiming the "right to organize without interference by mill officials." And after a strike in Augusta, when the board heard charges against 9 workers charged with "sabotage and violence," 5 were found guilty though "no effort was made to prove sabotage or violence." Echoing an oft-expressed criticism, a La Grange United Textile Workers (UTW) member told the Georgia-Carolina Textile Council that his local had "never had a decision from the Cotton Textile Industrial Relations Board" though it had "plenty of grievances." UTW organizer Albert Cox asked pointedly the question on the minds of many Georgia petitioners to the board, "Is the NIRA [National Industrial Recovery Act] a bona fide law. . . . Or is it a farce?"[7]

Labor's mounting dissatisfaction with the board was evident in the indictment of its work contained in a stinging letter from Georgia labor board representative O. E. Petry, who charged that board recommendations were systematically ignored by management to such an extent that state workers had "lost confidence in both the State Board and the National Board." Noting that UTW had grown rapidly in Georgia in spite of bitter management opposition, Petry concluded that state workers had decided that the board was "worse than useless" because it was being actively "used to nullify Section 8 of the code and Section 7a of the NIRA." Petry's letter is filled with allegations that in Newnan, Augusta, Sargent, and elsewhere employers were responding to union organization with eviction, blacklisting, discrimination, and lockouts, all of which left workers unemployed and helpless. Confronted by evidence that the NRA mediation process in Georgia was damaged beyond repair, state board chairman Thomas Quigley resigned in protest. In light of the accumulated abuses he had documented, Petry also left the state board, as he "could no longer be a party to its activities."[8]

As a result of the textile industry's refusal to abide by state and national board decisions, the situation spun out of control in August of 1934, when the UTW called a national convention to explore responses to employer intransigence. Convention observer James A. Dombrowski of Highlander Folk School found "radical militant Southern textile workers demanding action," with "conservative politically minded and ambitious leaders holding them back." At this meeting, delegates endorsed a labor party and called a general strike, to begin September 1. By this time, Georgia textile workers had rejected the timid efforts of the Georgia Federation of Labor and embraced the UTW international as the institution most likely to meet their needs. Already, textile workers at the Eagle-Phoenix Mill in Columbus were out on strike, as were their brothers and

sisters beyond the state line, thus forcing the international to take action. After a series of wildcat strikes in Alabama, the UTW leadership, including President Thomas McMahon, had no choice but to endorse a nationwide work stoppage. In Georgia, the combination of the hated stretch-out and NRA failures produced widespread dissatisfaction, but limited organizational progress. Georgia had long been hostile territory for union organizers, which meant that prospects for a favorable outcome were limited. Despite the state's antiunion climate, however, many workers flocked to the union banner just before the strike broke out, joining in order to qualify for strike benefits in the full knowledge that their jobs were in jeopardy as a result of their unprecedented actions. Counted among the union forces was a small contingent of African American workers who, despite the prevalence of Jim Crow locals, cast its lot with the struggling UTW.[9]

On the verge of a major walkout, Georgia workers looked to Governor Eugene Talmadge for neutrality in the labor-management confrontation; and there was some reason to be hopeful in view of his public pronouncements on this issue. Talmadge, courting worker support, insisted that management was capable of handling the situation without government intervention. Moreover, he cited his refusal to employ the National Guard in strikes at Augusta and Rome as evidence of his commitment to labor. The governor pointedly asserted that he was "not mad with organized labor," but rather insisted that "they are my friends and I am their friend," which meant that "a majority of them are going to vote for me on election day."[10]

This alliance lasted until one day after the election, when Talmadge, safely returned to office, turned on the workers whose support he had courted and ordered the Georgia guard into service to preserve order and enable employers to reopen struck plants. Talmadge's intervention was clearly the action that broke the back of the strike in Georgia. State troops were stationed in Aragon, Cartersville, La Grange, Newnan, Columbus, Barnesville, Social Circle, Trion, Griffin, Augusta, Porterdale, Macon, Rockmart, and Atlanta. At Newnan, 153 workers from the UTW "flying squadron" were arrested and unceremoniously transported to Fort MacPherson in Atlanta for detention. Here, the *Federated Press* reported, strikers in the "concentration camp" were subjected to "barbarous treatment" allegedly ordered by a commander determined to "terrorize the strikers." In agreement, Georgia strike leader S. A. Hollihan charged that "Hitlerism" had arrived in the state. While Dalton workers walked off the job in a holiday spirit, the battle elsewhere took on a more somber tone. Violence flared at the Bibb properties in Macon, where five workers

were charged with assault and battery. Meanwhile, in Atlanta, tear gas was used to disperse a crowd of one thousand at the Exposition Mills, and private police guarded the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills. Most accounts indicate that the strike produced an especially volatile situation in Georgia, where several workers paid for their militancy with their lives. From the death of W. N. "Reuben" Sanders in Columbus to the clash at Trion in north Georgia that resulted in severe beatings for two nonstrikers as well as fatal shootings of one guard and one striker, the Georgia conflict was a bitter struggle. In Augusta, where a trapped policeman shot his way out of a hostile crowd, another striker lost his life. Despite the escalating violence, the Associated Press reported that although the Georgia mills "bristled with guards," the "number of shutdowns grew."[11]

Acutely aware of the critical role played by state governors and the National Guard in suppressing the strike, UTW's Francis Gorman, chairman of the national strike committee, implored President Roosevelt and the governors, including Talmadge, to halt the use of state militias against strikers. Gorman charged that the current tactics were "wholly unlawful" and "provocative of disorder and deaths." To the union it was clear that "the principal function of these troops [was] to protect strike breakers" and thereby weaken the strike. The union urged Roosevelt to offer a "word of advice" to state officials to ensure that any use of state troops would be "strictly impartial."[12] While Gorman and UTW floundered when confronted by official repression, the Georgia Federation of Labor struggled to advance the cause of workers who had gone beyond the AFL to take control of their own movement. On September 14, the *Atlanta Journal of Labor* proclaimed that "no one desire[d] a settlement of the textile strike more than organized labor," but complained that the public was not getting a "fair picture of the strike situation," including the reasons for the work stoppage. The *Journal* maintained that one of two outcomes was possible, that workers would either be "reduced to a position of complete servitude," or they would be given their "industrial freedom," as intended by the NIRA. Reflecting the widespread circulation of allegations concerning Communist inspiration, the Atlanta Federation also assured the public that workers sought no "Soviet" or worker control, but merely wanted a "share" in determining their futures. To the *Journal of Labor*, both "reactionary capitalists" and misguided radicals posed a threat to worker interests; in short, Georgia's craft unionists were convinced that the Communists "would destroy both the organized worker and capital."[13]

Atlanta's trade unionists accurately perceived that the Communist Party constituted a growing force in the local labor movement. However,

they oversimplified and overestimated the party's role in the textile strike, which was a genuine workers' movement from the bottom up. Mill hand Calvin Freeman recalled significant worker engagement at Atlanta's Exposition Cotton Mill, at least at the beginning, when "we all stood outside the gates and picketed," with all mill gates "just filled with people." Firm support was also evident in Dalton, Columbus, Macon, Hogansville, and Newnan, target of "one of those flying trips" remembered well by unionist Etta Mae Zimmerman, who also asserted the widely held worker assumption that "Roosevelt was wantin' people to organize" and "was on [their] side." As the strike developed, however, Communists sensed an element of vulnerability in their Atlanta area labor work. On September 20 the party's Birmingham district organizer reported to New York on "a real weakness in [party] organization" in the Atlanta area. Although local comrades were "trying to do what they [could] in the textile situation," it appears that this organizational work was generally confined to literature distribution and membership recruitment. The result was limited progress on the membership front and the very gradual development of "contact with various textile workers throughout the state," where the ILD was gaining strength and Communists were attempting to establish a presence among strikers. Evidence of their presence may be found in the arrest of fifteen "radicals" at a mill village in Shannon, where local authorities acted quickly to "prevent serious trouble." The radical crime was the distribution of Communist literature among strikers, many of whom proved to be unreceptive to appeals from the Left. Elsewhere, two party activists, Nannie Leah Washburn and Annie Mae Leathers, were driven from Gate City, only to reappear in Atlanta on the picket line, where they were unceremoniously arrested at the Exposition Mills, charged with "Red agitating." Washburn was on the picket line for less than one day when she was jailed for "insurrection" and "trying to overthrow the government" though she "didn't even have a gun . . . just had a *Daily Worker*."[14]

On the front lines in their defense was the recently arrived party activist Hosea Hudson, who organized a workers' committee in Atlanta's east side "Peoplestown" district. Taking full advantage of his own "proletarian education," Hudson was successful in mobilizing public support for the incarcerated radicals while advancing the Communist cause within Atlanta's worker community. Working in close partnership with attorney Ben Davis, Hudson and his supporters built a substantial local movement dedicated to winning freedom for the two women, both of whom remained committed Communist agitators.[15] The two radical firebrands were detained for seventy-four days before Davis succeeded in forcing

their release on bail. Despite the best efforts of Davis and Hudson, it was a mean season for the Communist Party, as strike support withered before the onslaught from public officials and employers.

The major chink in management's armor, which both the local press and Atlanta's elite groups accurately perceived, was the extent to which radical rhetoric resonated among the poorest of the poor in Georgia's African American community. When Angelo Herndon explained "how poor people had to struggle to try to live" in a society that "didn't provide for the black people or the poor white," he galvanized support that Nannie Washburn insisted was "better than you'd expect." And in social worker Augusta Dunbar's view, it seemed clear that without Roosevelt's programs, "there would have been some kind of revolution because you cannot let that many people go hungry very long without a good deal of violence." Alarmed by accounts of radical inroads among black and white workers, the press worked to link unionism with Communism in an attempt to blunt the party's appeal. *The Atlanta Georgian*, for example, cited "public evidence of Communism in Atlanta and in the textile centers of the Carolinas," while warning that the Communist Party was actively "bending its efforts to bring about 'negro equality' in the Southern textile mills" and injecting into the textile strike "a racial issue that does not now exist." To the *Georgian*, race had "never been an issue in Southern labor troubles" because white and black workmen "respect each other's places, understand each other's problems, and live in harmony and peace." Moreover, it argued, southern employers realized that their "own welfare is greatly dependent not alone upon fair treatment for all labor, but mutual trust and confidence as well." Given these assumptions, the Communist "effort to stir up new strife" could be "nothing else but an effort to inject a race quarrel into the already serious textile situation and to whip Southern opinion into line through fear of race trouble." The message for white textile workers was clear: many of the chief advocates of this strike "were avowed Communists, whose real objective [was] the destruction of our form of government." To prevent such an outcome, the *Georgian* insisted, it was time for "both employers and employees to get together with the President's mediators and end this strike," which could "affect the welfare of every man and woman and child in the United States."[16]

Determined to crush the strike, mill owners often proceeded on yet another track, exploiting political fears to construct a united front against striking workers. Typical was the deputizing of local workers and townspeople opposed to the strike, which became the local line of defense against disorder. In many cases, this strategy increased the tension

between strikers and local citizens, thus escalating the potential for armed conflict, such as that observed at Trion, Augusta, and Macon, where murder and violence ruled the day. While the dramatic incidents featuring the use of the Georgia National Guard have drawn historians' attention, it is equally important to note the incendiary environment created when rival groups of local mill hands clashed over their own conflicting attitudes toward unionization. In nonunion Hall County, for example, management held all the cards in this deadly game. As violence flared elsewhere in Georgia and the Carolinas, Gainesville community and business leaders left nothing to chance. On September 12, 1934, Gainesville journalist A. S. Hardy and publisher C. R. Hammond led a staged community rally at the Gainesville High School auditorium, designed to demonstrate public support for management and demand that civic order be maintained in the face of the challenge presented in other Georgia locales by union "flying squadrons" of workers bent on closing the mills. A resolution adopted by "the citizens of Gainesville" pledged that so long as they wanted to work, local laborers at the Gainesville, Chicopee, and Pacolet mills would have their "undivided united support and assistance" in the "protection of their inalienable rights." Moreover, the assemblage insisted upon "the maintenance of law and order and peace and good will in this community." To carry out his charge, Sheriff Irvin L. Lawson complied with the wishes of officials at the Chicopee mill by deputizing a posse to protect the company from any outside interference in its operations. The result was the organization of the "Chicopee Black Hats," a group of three dozen temporary enforcers empowered to engage the union enemy. Local attorney Edgar B. Dunlap, who helped organize the Black Hats, maintained that this extralegal force notified the unions that they had better "stay out of Hall County," lest they be greeted by unfriendly hosts. Dunlap later asserted that the Black Hats confronted at least one flying squadron at the county line, where the interlopers retreated in order to avoid assured violence. The legal system and political elites, anything but neutral, made common cause with capital against organized labor when this crisis emerged in northeast Georgia, where the strike never resulted in significant inroads into the local workforce. Reflecting on the aggressive management and community response to the general strike, the local press took pride in the fact that Gainesville was one of the few principal towns in north Georgia free of labor troubles in 1934, noting disingenuously that the "workers" had made it clear that "they did not welcome 'flying squadrons'" and that there was "no room here for labor agitators and disturbers" among employees who were "satisfied with the scale of wages and working hours."[17]

While bloodshed and violence disturbed the tranquility of the Georgia hills in 1934, still other issues confronted the workers rendered jobless by the work stoppage. Confronted by "wild tales" about what FERA was planning to do in the event of increased client loads occasioned by the impending strike, Gay Shepperson announced on the eve of the strike that strikers would be eligible for relief and "be treated the same as all other people on relief rolls." Insisting that GERA did not "attempt to judge the merits of labor disputes," Shepperson cited Hopkins's directive authorizing local relief agencies to "furnish relief to the families of striking wage earners after careful investigation has shown that their resources are not sufficient to meet emergency needs." While determined to avoid involvement with the union, Augusta Dunbar was relieved "when the word came down to us that we could feed the strikers and help them." It was this stance that prompted a protest letter from Columbus attorney H. H. Swift, who was angered by the wildcat strike underway in his community. Swift denounced as "a great discrimination against the employers" the idea of relief payments from public funds to workers unwilling to "work under the fair conditions of a code prescribed and approved by the administration." To Swift, the strike would never have been called "without the active aid of financial support from the Federal Government" and could only be interpreted as "unjustifiable and unwarranted." By the time the FERA relief policy went into effect, however, the strikers had "pretty much" closed down the Georgia mills. Shepperson told Hopkins on September 6 that approximately 50,000 Georgia operatives were out on strike from Columbus to Newnan, "all over Georgia" and that her office had "good workers" on the scene throughout the state.[18]

Determined to present an upbeat view of the conflict from management's perspective, George A. Sloan of the Cotton Textile Institute publicly claimed that the strike was ineffective, especially in the South, where businessmen, professional elites, and community leaders everywhere were "rallying to the defense of the fundamental American principle that the right of the individual to work is just as sacred as the right not to work or the right to strike." Already by September 7, he argued, "the fog in the South [was] clearing up." His claim was premature, in view of the contrast between his view from New York and the onsite observations reported by Shepperson at the same moment. In reality, much of the textile industry in Georgia had ground to a halt, at least until September 17 when Talmadge declared martial law in the state, thus dealing the strikers a mortal blow. The governor now made it clear that he was determined to "protect men who want to work." As late as September 20, a majority of Georgia textile workers remained on strike, but official

opposition eventually led to abject defeat for UTW. The antiunion tide in Georgia was simply too strong once state power had been unleashed on striking workers. As a result, workers looked to Washington and the New Deal for succor, but it soon became evident that the NRA Code Authority was in fact a paper tiger. Faced by a divided workforce, a resilient Cotton Textile Institute, the president's personal relationships with some Georgia mill owners, the declaration of martial law, the prohibition of mass picketing, and a toothless textile board, UTW was forced to make a hard trade from a weakened position. Presenting a brave front, workers in Augusta and La Grange paraded in the streets; meanwhile, Fort MacPherson's detainees were quietly released as the mills opened one by one. But very little had been gained by the union. The new Textile Labor Inquiry Board, under the direction of New Hampshire governor John G. Winant, helped craft a settlement that despite its recognition that southern workers had a legitimate grievance, left workers with what *Newsweek* termed "little more than a pious hope." Ignoring reality, UTW treated the outcome as a "magnificent victory" in which the union had "gained every substantial thing that [it] could have gained." Conspicuous by its absence was any formal recognition of UTW as bargaining agent for textile workers on a national scale. While mill owners agreed to abide by Winant board decisions and promised not to discriminate in hiring strikers, the settlement asserted that working conditions under the code had been "vastly improved," but that "industry wide collective bargaining with UTW was not feasible," and that existing conditions did not justify any immediate changes in hours and wages. Despite the disappointing result, UTW workers placed their faith in Winant board assurances that it would "move swiftly to pass on cases of alleged discrimination against strikers."[19] It was a thin reed on which to rely.

Throughout Georgia, uncertain workers prepared for a return to work. The response to the strike had been mixed, depending on locality; as a result, the resumption of normal work rhythms occurred in a piecemeal fashion, as workers trudged back to the mills one by one, without any sense of universal triumph but hopeful that the settlement would be honored and that UTW president Francis Gorman was correct in interpreting the outcome as a union victory. They were to be sorely disappointed. Immediately following the settlement, some Georgia workers charged that a "wholesale lockout" against unionized workers was underway. While local results varied dramatically, what followed was a mixture of blacklists, refusals to reemploy, conditional employment, or occasional normalcy. The harsh reality was that relatively few strikers were reemployed and almost no unionists were rehired. On September 27, an alarmed

S. A. Hollihan, the Georgia strike director, indicated that his office had already received reports of two thousand cases of union members being refused reemployment, as many employers practiced "wholesale discrimination." Equally concerned, the ILD demanded immediate federal intervention to ensure the "right of the textile workers to organize," which was being "violated without even a pretense of due process." There was much truth in Nannie Washburn's succinct verdict: "the workers—they were sold out."[20]

The increased incidence of employer retaliation against union workers underscored the significance of the Roosevelt administration's policy toward unemployed strikers and their families. While Shepperson's office worked to ease the impact of management's poststrike retaliation against those perceived to be labor activists and supporters, the burden created by mill owner intransigence was sometimes more than could be managed effectively. In trouble spots like LaFayette and Rockmart, where violence had flared and workers were arrayed against workers in a struggle over union organization, there is evidence of city officials' collaboration with management in an effort to limit eligibility for relief payments. Desperate workers turned to the now discredited union for aid in securing the benefits available under federal policy guidelines. Rockmart UTW secretary Lillian Bailey appealed directly to Harry Hopkins with an account of union workers without "sufficient relief here to keep off hunger since the textile strike was called." Claiming that "numerous families" were "on starvation," Bailey told Hopkins that the local relief office was encouraging destitute workers to buy on credit, which was impossible with no prospect of employment. Rockmart relief administrators "almost insult people who call for relief," while in Winder relief politics were in a "deplorable state" due to local officials' efforts to discourage applicants through "humiliating treatment." Similarly, Trion workers, who had suffered greatly as a result of their own internal divisions, petitioned Roosevelt and the Textile Labor Relations Board for redress, arguing that local relief furnished "barely enough food to keep [them] from starving." Restrictions on relief were combined with a company policy of evictions targeting union members. Complaining that Trion's union employees had gotten a "rotten deal," the petitioners saw the president as their "only hope." Although board investigator Telfair Knight was "convinced that this company [did not] intend to re-employ most of the union men" and had "evidence to the contrary," the workers' plea fell on deaf ears at the White House.[21]

Alerted to the growing problems of Georgia's workers, UTW president Francis Gorman also approached FERA in Washington with an appeal on

behalf of the Rockmart workers, as well as union members in Macon, Rome, Augusta, Trion, Villa Rica, Douglasville, LaFayette, and Summerville, where some mills were "practicing extreme methods of persecution in the form of discrimination and evictions." Warning of another strike in retaliation, Gorman argued that since employers were not living up to their promises to the board, "the victims should receive some consideration and subsistence until they can find employment." Citing the president's request that management avoid discrimination in rehiring, Gorman blasted employers who failed to comply with the terms of the settlement as well as the public officials who took workers off the relief rolls when they were evicted. Even worse, in Macon, relief officials exerted pressure on union members, asking why they had joined UTW and why they did not simply go back to work. Moreover, there is evidence that jobless relief workers were being paid below the federal scale. In this case, Shepperson denied discrimination and attributed these practices to inexperienced relief workers. Gorman's appeal, in fact, reflected a barrage of complaints from union groups in Georgia and the Carolinas, where the abuses were most prevalent. While Shepperson's office attempted to apply federal policy in an even-handed way and often consulted with the Georgia Federation of Labor when in doubt, the magnitude of management noncompliance made their task unmanageable.[22]

The root of the problem lay in a coordinated employer policy designed to skirt the provisions of the strike settlement from the beginning. As early as September 22, National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) associate counsel John C. Gall laid the groundwork for management's stance with a memorandum asserting that "no employer is obligated to take back more men than the present needs of the business justify." Moreover, he denied that there was any obligation to reemploy strikers who struck in violation of a contract, engaged in violence, participated in unlawful restraint of willing workers, engaged in deception by "misrepresenting the Government's relief policy . . . falsely representing that the Government would provide relief funds to all strikers," violated any law, or "committed any acts which, had they been committed in the regular course of employment, would have been just grounds for discharge." Most important, Gall maintained that there was "no obligation to reemploy any man who has voluntarily severed his employment relation if to reemploy him necessitates the discharge of a person who has been employed to take his place." To NAM, it was important to clarify these issues because the term "without discrimination" had been seized upon by labor and incorporated into many poststrike agreements. In this judgment, he was supported by George A. Sloan of the Cotton Textile Institute, who

adamantly opposed firing any "bona fide employees to make room for those who left work." By adhering to NAM advice, replacement workers would be protected as the rehiring process went forward. This stance was welcome news among Georgia mill owners. Aware of the confusion created by the abrupt end of the strike without a definitive agreement, the Cotton Manufacturer's Association of Georgia advised its members to seek legal advice when solving the "very serious and perplexing problem" that remained.[23] In framing its own position, the state organization relied heavily on the NAM statement, which offered the flexibility needed in the employer effort to reestablish primacy in labor relations.

Even before the strike officially came to an end, Georgia employers encouraged the restoration of business as usual, starting with the reopening of plants on the Monday following the declaration of martial law. As workers returned to the mills in a piecemeal fashion, the back-to-work movement created open rifts within the labor force. In Atlanta, Effie Gray remembered that plant supervisors entered the worker community to encourage an early return to work, which induced some strikers to reluctantly return to the mills. This created hard feelings within the workforce, severing relationships that "never [were] the same," since people "just wasn't as neighboring" and "would draw away from people." In other quarters, worker frustration was vented against the administration's duplicity, which led Hogansville striker Etta Mae Zimmerman to denounce Talmadge as a "dishonorable governor" for his betrayal of working people. Meanwhile, the workforce in Columbus, especially at the Eagle/Phenix Mill, was "torn by internal strife" that was exacerbated by management's stubborn refusal to rehire former employees. Here, Vice-President Frank Bradley "aggravated the situation by continuing his violations wholesale," a policy that "produced a nasty situation."[24] Like the labor force of Rockmart and other Georgia communities, the Columbus worker community was deeply divided as a result of the strike and its inconclusive result.

While recalcitrance in rehiring was typically management's initial response to the failed strike, other strategies were soon used to underscore worker vulnerability. While many plants followed the Eagle/Phenix pattern of insisting that hiring was limited by depressed demand and lost orders, some mills employed other techniques. In Griffin, for example, state guard troops were used to prevent strikers from returning to work. This stratagem was facilitated by the friendly attitude of the Talmadge regime, which induced mill owners to "openly boast that they control state government." Textile Labor Relations Board investigators confirmed the defiant stance taken by most Georgia employers, who "oppose[d] to the

limit the principles of collective bargaining" and refused to "stand for anything . . . remotely connected to it." In some instances, even non-union laborers suffered discrimination, as in the case of Atlanta Exposition Mill worker Frank Hicks, who was discharged on suspicion of union involvement. Hicks recalled that he "went back to work and my boss man told me that I was helping organize because all them people was in my house," people he could not simply turn away. "Some of them folks was my kinfolks and some wasn't, but they come over there to see what was going to take place, to see if they shut down. So, they didn't let me go back to work." There was much truth in Etta Mae Zimmerman's conclusion that due to labor board incompetence and gubernatorial betrayal, workers found themselves "in worse conditions . . . than before the strike," either starving or subject to dismissal "on account of union activities."[25]

Determined to press their advantage, mill owners quickly embraced additional measures intended to squelch union activism in the future. First, to curb the virus of unionism, many Georgia employers instituted a blacklist that effectively banished strikers from the textile mills of Georgia for the foreseeable future. Atlanta union man Marion "Peanut" Brown recalled the way the system discriminated:

> The other ones that was in the strike, especially the leaders, you know, they did have to leave. When they started hiring them back they'd come back to the office then, you know. And you'd give them the name and they'd look on the list. If you were on the list, it was "goodbye Charlie." See, they wouldn't hire you back. They had on there whatever you done. All the things you had said. And they kept it down.[26]

Coupled with the blacklist was another form of discrimination that struck hard at the worker—eviction from company housing, which had long been important to the family economy of textile hands. Arthur Duncan recalled that the Newnan Cotton Mill carefully targeted union activists and strike leaders as management worked to "dispossess people that had participated in the strike." In Commerce, there was little harmony at Harmony Mills, where eviction and denial of relief drove desperate workers to ask Roosevelt to "speed the wheels of justice and give us our rights as American citizens." The Aragon mills simply advised striker families that it was in the "best interest of all concerned" that they "go elsewhere for employment." Here, according to federal investigators, "evictions and threats of evictions [had] aggravated the situation." Likewise, in Trion and LaFayette, local sheriffs actively assisted the mills with the forcible removal of employees who had chosen the union side in the struggle. In

"bloody Trion," management admitted to at least fifty evictions, which, it argued, were essential so that new employees might be housed; it denied, however, putting workers out on the street, a questionable assertion in view of evidence to the contrary in affidavits and reports from the Trion UTW local. Even more sophisticated were the managers at Calloway Mills in La Grange, where striking employees were forced to sign "legal release of employment" forms and "submit themselves to immediate eviction" lest they be denied relief. And in Columbus, the union reported wholesale issuance of "dispossessory notices" to workers who had "no means upon which to go." So voluminous were the reports of similar actions around the state, especially in the Macon area, that the Atlanta Regional Labor Board implored the National Labor Relations Board to ask mill owners to "discontinue eviction from company houses until after discrimination cases [were] heard." And further to the west, in Manchester and Barnesville recruiters actively worked to persuade locked-out textile workers to provide replacement labor in Monroe, while relief clients were pressured by these predatory head-hunters with threats that their allotments would be cut off. Relief officials did their best to discredit this assertion and cooperated with the union to maintain a smooth flow of agency services.[27]

Faced by overwhelming pressures, workers could only fall back on the resources of the federal government in Georgia. Numerous personal accounts verify the reliance of unemployed strikers on FERA, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and eventually in 1935, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), all work relief agencies sponsored by the Roosevelt administration, in which so many hopes had been invested. Evicted Newnan unionist Arthur Duncan remembered the fervor of the worker reaction to the image of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who promised employment and delivered a relief program that meant "you'd have jobs," rather than "charity." For Duncan, the answer was the Public Works Administration, which, despite the modest wage, was a "lifesaver." He was equally impressed with FDR's promise that "you ought to have the right to organize if you want to."[28] His enthusiasm for Roosevelt and the New Deal mirrored the sentiments of most working-class Georgians, especially the jobless legions who turned their faces toward Washington in the Depression Years.

But there were other voices vying for the loyalties of the unemployed masses and displaced unionists in the wake of the failed strike of 1934. Always a factor in union mobilization, especially in the Atlanta area, the resilient Communists were ready to offer another institutional response to the degradation of workers, both black and white, who suffered under the dual pressures of a depressed economy and oppressive management.

Like mainstream unions and the Roosevelt work relief agencies, the Communist Party constituted an external nationalizing force that vied with the forces of localism in the "hungry thirties." Battered by hardship and struggling under both state pressure and stifling management paternalism, some workers were prepared to embrace the solutions proposed by the active radicals who continued to organize in the face of long odds against them.

While liberalism and New Deal social provision seemed the answer to the strikers' dilemma, some Georgians entertained radical solutions to their isolation in the wake of the failed work stoppage of 1934. Communist leadership had played a key role in the walkout of 600 workers at the Fulton Bag Mill in Atlanta, which resulted in mass firings. Similarly, in Griffin, 600 sympathy strikers demanded the rehiring of all 600 Fulton Bag operatives, but in the wake of "much terror by the company thugs and mass evictions," a confused workforce saw little progress. Not only was management intransigent, but public officials cooperated with a crackdown that escalated into a major Red scare in Atlanta during the months of October and November. The outspoken Communist activists Nannie Leah Washburn and Annie Mae Leathers were denied bail in late September, and not long thereafter Atlanta police orchestrated a raid on an alleged Communist meeting in Decatur at the home of an Emory faculty member, Mrs. R. W. Alling. Emory had earned a liberal and even radical reputation, but this group was regarded with special suspicion by Atlanta authorities because it did include a few Communist attendees, including one organizer for the Communist Party's International Workers Order (IWO). Local party organizer Hosea Hudson was invited to the organizational meeting but chose not to attend in the belief that "it don't do to get everybody piled up in one place." This raid was an extension of the Red hunt of 1934, which had accelerated during Don West's and Clyde Johnson's tenure as party organizers in the Atlanta area. The surprise visit to the Alling residence ended in the incarceration of Emory University graduate student Nathan Yagol, New York lawyer Alexander Racholin, and African American union leader Clarence Weaver; moreover, three women attendees were required to post bail the following day. In Hudson's words, "you talk about a mess, you had a mess!" Charged under the outdated insurrection law, the alleged conspirators were victims of the ongoing Red Scare, which reflected enflamed employer attitudes and official assumptions linking the militancy of the textile strike with Communist inspiration. On the heels of the Decatur incident, five black citizens of Atlanta were also arrested and large quantities of Communist literature confiscated in an expansion of the dragnet. Moreover,

another raid targeted the offices of the Atlanta Urban League, on suspicion that its Negro Workers Council was a Communist front organization; the enforcers left empty-handed, but their clumsy tactics induced Jesse O. Thomas, the League's southern field secretary, to protest the raid as nothing less than "insurrection hysteria." Despite the diligence of the Atlanta authorities, U.S. military intelligence officials did not believe Communist Party activities had increased significantly in Fulton County. Rather, they concluded, the arrests occurred due to the exuberance of the local police, as well as especially vigilant local authorities. While the authorities were unable to obtain conviction of the Decatur defendants, Hudson recalled that the raid "broke up the IWO" and reminded radicals that they were subject to "constant harassment."[29]

Meanwhile, the *Southern Worker* reported that the Fulton County Grand Jury was proceeding with an "investigation" of the "activities of worker organizations," with the "announced intention of bringing more indictments and attempting to crush all 'Red' activity." Solicitors John Hudson and John A. Boykin pushed ahead, convinced that they had uncovered a complex Communist conspiracy in Atlanta, but to their dismay, the Emory group, Washburn, Leathers, and the black detainees had been freed on bail by December as a result of ILD legal action, thus enabling them to maintain the tempo of radical organizing in the Atlanta area. Defiant still, Washburn and Leathers vowed to "continue the fight to better the living conditions of the textile workers no matter what the cost may be." The militants maintained that detention had only made them "more determined to fight for the liberation of the working class and the Negro people, because the white workers and the Negro people [had] the same common oppressor."[30]

Pressing his advantage, Fulton County Solicitor John A. Boykin moved to strengthen the legal arsenal at his disposal with a proposal for a sweeping new "anti-Red" law, which might serve as a model for patriots throughout the Southeast. Boykin proposed that the mere possession of Communist literature become an offense that might result in sentences of five to twenty-five years in prison. He sought to "prevent the spread of Communism" and to outlaw "acts in preparation of the crime."[31] At the same time, Boykin expanded the scope of the pending investigation by interviewing a series of new witnesses thought capable of shedding light on Communist infiltration of Atlanta labor and liberal organizations. Casting a wide net, he quizzed Rev. J. A. Martin, John Hope Jr., son of the Atlanta University president, and Rev. J. Raymond Henderson of Wheat Street Baptist Church. While he had no connection with the Emory group, the younger Hope was particularly vulnerable in view

of his own ties with the party-dominated National Students League. By late November, the anticommunist hysteria was also to be found elsewhere in the state, where employers worked to undermine the remnants of unionism, and patriotic organizations joined in the fray. When Brenau University in Gainesville proposed to cooperate with former antiwar congresswoman Jeannette Rankin to establish a "chair of peace," Atlanta American Legion Post No. 1 attacked the idea as "un-American" and supportive of Communist ideas. While the Legion carried on a running battle with Brenau authorities, including Vice-President H. J. Pearse, the veterans were unable to generate much opposition to an idea that seemed quite harmless to most contemporary observers. Though the chair never became a reality, the negative reaction to the Legion's overreaching in this controversy suggested that the flame of anticommunism was flickering by the end of the year.[32] The outlook for civil liberties had brightened sufficiently for the ACLU to urge radical preacher Howard Kester to organize local libertarians for action, which it thought was merited by the "aroused public opinion over recent police raids." Successful in this effort, Kester told Roger Baldwin that the time was right to organize civil liberties groups elsewhere in the South, where the "anti-Red hysteria which is gripping Georgia" was "gradually spreading to other states."[33] Although the attack had peaked, however, Communists struggled mightily to maintain a beachhead in the still unfriendly confines of a state where the memory of the textile strike remained fresh.

One line of resistance against the virus of Communism was an assault on academic institutions thought to be sympathetic to radical ideas. The subtext of the attack on Emory graduate student Nathan Yagol had been the deep suspicion that Emory, as an outpost of mainstream liberalism, provided cover and comfort for the enemy at the gates. To their credit, Emory officials stood behind the student and the principle of free inquiry, but in the course of the battle, they subjected themselves to the barbs of the opposition. Students, faculty, and administration defended Yagol essentially on free speech grounds, making a case that drew the support of both the Constitution and the voice of Atlanta labor, the *Journal of Labor*. While the American Legion sided with the prosecutors, local opinion was sufficiently diverse so that Yagol eventually went free, but not before a sizable element among the Atlanta elite embraced the actions of Hudson and Boykin. Meanwhile, a normally anti-Talmadge journal, the *Commonwealth*, launched its own attack on alleged Communists, including those safely ensconced in the academy. In "The Hand of Moscow in Georgia," columnist Reavis O'Neal charged that the Communist Party was engaged in an effort to "control the schools" and eventually

foster "Soviet Republics" in the South. Radical doctrines, he claimed, had already made inroads in black institutions such as Atlanta University. Subsidized by the foundations, "Communist Party work [was allegedly] being carried on in the negro districts and in the negro colleges in Atlanta." The complicity of academic institutions was especially galling to O'Neal and the *Commonwealth*, particularly the apparent involvement of a student and a teacher, Yagol and Alling, which confirmed their deepest suspicions concerning radical sympathies at colleges and universities.[34] While charges against Alling were dismissed and Yagol was never indicted, Hudson's and Boykin's persecution of local radicals constituted a strong deterrent to Communist work in Atlanta. Although the grand jury ultimately failed to indict, its extended deliberations had a chilling effect on party organizing in the promising field of Fulton and DeKalb counties. It remained to be seen whether free speech or political intolerance would dominate the public debates yet to come as Georgians grappled with the systemic problems of the Great Depression.

For their part, Communists were demoralized by November 1934, overwhelmed by the series of body blows sustained since the failure of the general textile strike. The liberal Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) expressed confidence that "communistic following among Atlanta Negroes" was "negligible." Separated though he was from the black masses, the words of CIC's white educational director R. B. Eleazer reveal the perspective of Atlanta's liberal community on the limits of Communism's appeal to African Americans. Eleazer confidently asserted in late November that black citizens, "traditionally loyal to their government," did not "look with favor upon movements advocating violence and revolution." While CIC acknowledged that "a few Negroes may have been compromised by designing propagandists operating under false pretenses," it insisted that "patient correction" was needed, not "extreme severity" or "arresting on mere suspicion." More to the point, the long-term problem of radicalism could best be solved by "correcting the ills and injustices upon which revolution thrives."[35]

Although his vision was partially impaired due to both his race and elite status, Eleazer was not far off base in his analysis of the Communist Party's predicament in late 1934. On November 2 the obstacles faced by local Communists were detailed in a long report by a District 17 organizer, who noted that there were three struggling Communist Party units in Atlanta, one of them inactive, one composed of those in jail, and a third "laying low" because of an informer at Fulton Bag Mill, who claimed to know every member of the unit. This may have been a reference to Annie Leah Washburn's brother, whom she denounced as

a collaborationist and "stool pigeon" for his willingness to cooperate with Solicitor Hudson at the time of her incarceration. In addition to the party units, four ILD branches were in operation, including one group of imprisoned members, one led by a "comrade now hiding out with an indictment and warrant out against him," one "laying low" in fear of the stool pigeon's wrath, and a group organized within the African American painters' union. In theory five International Workers Order units existed, three in black neighborhoods and one Jewish branch that was "somewhat terrorized as many of the members [were] known." As Hosea Hudson noted, the IWO was near collapse due to the fallout from the Alling raid. All party members were reportedly traumatized by the escalation of the Red Scare in October, especially the devastating official raids on liberal meetings and a dozen Communist homes, not to mention the grand jury's "probe into 'Red activities'" and the detention of Washburn and Leathers.[36]

Attempting to account for the local Communist Party's difficulties, the party observer singled out the Atlanta section organizer, who as an African American was handicapped in his work with white workers, and asserted that both the party and the ILD suffered from a lack of "leadership which will work out new ways and means for underground work." Recalling previous lapses in leadership, he argued that the "terrific weaknesses in the Atlanta section" were the "result of bad work in the past, together with the necessity of one more good force, a white comrade." He also railed against middle-class organizers, insisting that a worker or someone who could at least work among workers and relate to their problems was absolutely essential to future success: "for Christ sake no more lawyers or poets." On a brighter note, the prisoners, Washburn and Leathers, were "excellent" and carried on a "militant class self-defense." Most comrades believed that the two firebrands should be defended by the ILD, though ILD attorney John Geer, who saw himself as a "young hero," seemed too willing to concede conviction in the lower courts.[37]

While dispirited by so much adversity, the Communist Party observer did express one hope for growth, based on the "tremendous resentment" aroused by the raids on liberal meetings. He saw in Alling, Yagol, Weaver, Racolin, supportive clergy, and the Socialists "great possibilities of a very broad united front" that could be interracial and intergenerational. If that energy could be harnessed to working-class causes, such as the Washburn-Leathers defense, great progress was possible, especially if a white comrade could be identified to take the lead. Also essential to any advances would be stronger direction from the center, including serious attention from the national party organization, which had allegedly

demonstrated "insufficient awareness" of the problems faced in Atlanta. Raised consciousness on the local scene would also be crucial if the party was to capitalize on the textile strike and its outcome. A sharpened awareness of a crisis situation seemed inevitable since Georgia, "following the development of martial law, shooting down of strikers, and concentration camps during the textile strike, [was] coming forward as the spearhead of actual fascism in the U.S." Since these issues provided the "clearest examples of fascism [the Party] could bring before the masses," the writer concluded, "immediate action [was] necessary."[38]

While the Communist Party struggled to survive, the Georgia labor movement pressed forward in quiet desperation. Faced by worker disillusionment and the skewed perception that organized labor had deserted locked-out workers in their moment of crisis and vulnerability, union officials and UTW attorney Joseph Jacobs later recalled that UTW had actually worked to force hearings on the rampant discrimination that workers faced in the wake of the strike and filed complaints against numerous employers, including Macon's Bibb Manufacturing Company, Atlanta Woolen Mills, Fulton Bag Mill, Atco, Porterdale Mill, Clark Thread Mill, Anchor Duck in Rome, Goodyear Mill in Cedartown, and Newnan Cotton Mill. Jacobs remembered a vigorous union effort to reverse lockouts and fight evictions, relying on management's nondiscrimination pledges made when the strike came to an end. Problems began almost immediately, including long delays in hearing schedules and board decisions; but it was the union that filed the complaints and the union that made the workers' case. Jacobs spent countless hours in magistrate courts "putting off the evictions, trying to keep them from throwing 'em out," but it was "like talking to a stone wall" because the mills had "more influence than [UTW] did and they would throw the people out." The key to this result was the Textile Manufacturers Association's decision that "they were going to discriminate against the people and 'if you goin' to make us put 'em back, you've got to go to court." This situation was further complicated by management influence over the judges and the reality that the textile board "didn't have any power in the court."[39]

Similarly, at the national level the union stubbornly pressed its argument with both the textile labor board and the Roosevelt administration. A case in point was the dispute over unjustified dismissals at the Globe, Sibley, and Enterprise Co. in Augusta, where management had flatly refused to comply with a board order to reinstate workers and halt evictions. In view of a clear violation, neither Gorman nor his union understood "why [they] should keep quiet under such abuse." As a follow-up, a diverse union delegation from Atlanta came to Washington to

demand that Roosevelt and the board "take immediate action to prevent this brazen defiance" by reinstating 324 jobless workers. In short, it is clear that the union had not left their members, but that the legal system was stacked against UTW from the beginning. Wholesale discrimination and hiring of replacement workers prevailed, as in Atco, where long-time employees watched helplessly as new operatives filled the positions they had occupied prior to the strike. Labor's frustration was clear in AFL president William Green's letter to a locked-out Atco worker, in which he cited the board as a last hope but consoled the victim, reminding him that while he had suffered from unemployment, he was "engaged in a great fight not only to free yourself but also your fellow workers from the unbearable conditions under which textile workers have lived and worked in the past."[40] Small comfort, indeed, for a man who had lost everything.

So it was for most textile unions in Georgia. As the strike collapsed, disillusionment set in, and workers left the UTW in droves. Whereas the union had claimed nearly fifty locals in Georgia when the strike began, by 1936, there were almost no strong locals remaining in the state, with the possible exception of the Columbus and Dalton organizations. The strike's failure and the union's inability to deliver on its promises produced widespread resentment and discouragement among workers who had cast their lot with organized labor in the wake of the ill-fated NRA revolution. Such was the sentiment expressed by locked out workers at Callaway Mills in La Grange, who were "afraid that there [was] going to be a bloody war." Protesting both evictions and a lockout, the Woman Citizens of La Grange bitterly asserted that "you advised organized labor. We have organized and you see the results." Although labor law was to take a more favorable turn in 1935, the UTW never regained its position in Georgia, where workers made their uneasy peace with triumphant employers. While workers had momentarily experienced the elation of an illusory victory, their optimism dissipated in the midst of blacklists, evictions, conditional contracts, stretch-outs, and other forms of discrimination imposed on them by employers who held the best cards in what had been a deadly game. Countless little dramas had been played out in a variety of communities, where workers participated in what historian John Salmond considers essentially isolated, independent work actions, never really fully savoring the exhilaration of membership in a truly national movement.[41]

A dramatic case in point was the desperate struggle of the unorganized workers at the Johnson and Johnson mill in remote Chicopee, where management had created a model community that set the standard for

corporate paternalism in the textile industry. Due to both progressive business practices and intense local pressures, the Gainesville-Chicopee area had escaped the violence and hostility that had gripped Georgia's mill villages in 1934. Yet even the compliant Chicopee labor force was not immune to the collective impulse when faced with a revolutionary scientific management system widely perceived by workers as a "stretch-out." Chicopee worker Clara Mae Cagle asserted, "that's when the war started." In August 1935, an independent workers' association fomented a walkout marked by a series of violent incidents that produced first a negotiated settlement and, finally, a company lockout that threatened social and economic harmony in the village. With workers deeply divided on the value of a union, there was conflict on the shop floor and "cussing at the wee hours of the morning," as mill village neighbors chose sides. The unresolved tension climaxed in October, when a band of workers attacked a dictatorial mill manager, N. T. Grimes, and administered crude justice with a sound beating. On October 20, 1935, a stunned Chicopee Manufacturing Corporation closed its doors and announced that it "did not care to operate under the conditions existing" in the community.[42]

Following the lockout decision, Johnson and Johnson employed targeted dismissals and evictions in an effort to systematically remove those who had been seduced by the union vision. H. H. Rogers, one of those fired, charged that he was the victim of a management effort to "get rid of practically all of the employees who were employees during the strike." Among those never rehired were strike committee activists, demonstrators, and perpetrators of violence, most of them evicted from their company-owned residences. Young Joe T. Wood, son of the company store operator, recalled aggressive action by company security men, who "were making a clean sweep of a lot of [his family's] friends." In addition, an indirect blacklist was imposed through temporary reductions in the workforce once the mill reopened after a two-month hiatus. In the midst of this disruption, organized labor took a new interest in the Chicopee crisis. Although the original employees' organization was not a Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) affiliate, George Googe of the Georgia AFL now expressed active interest in the conflict and its outcome.[43]

The end result was a compromise settlement involving the replacement of at least one plant administrator and the establishment of a new "management-labor team" that promised to restore the sense of community that had been lost during the strike. Although the plant reopened, labor-management relations suffered a serious setback during the crisis of 1935. And the company drew a line in the sand with a refusal to recognize the validity of a contract entered into earlier with the workers'

committee.[44] It is clear that the company had used the lockout and shutdown to identify and remove those workers deemed rebellious and sympathetic to organization.

In short, the Chicopee workers were forced to make painful concessions, in which they exchanged control of the workplace for a measure of security. Theirs was a hard trade. After rising in revolt, they suffered the wrath of a benefactor spurned but eventually won modification of the new incentive system, in ways understandable by the workforce. Yet the price of industrial peace was unquestionably worker acceptance of management prerogatives, in keeping with the culture of paternalism that prevailed within a community of rural-born workers still adjusting to the rigors of industrial discipline. While there would be numerous future efforts to unionize at Chicopee, labor's efforts came to naught, in part due to the bitter memories of the lost rebellion of the 1930s.

To TWUA research director Solomon Barkin, the basic southern problem was rooted in "the culture pattern of the Southern worker," which he claimed was "non-supportive if not antithetical to collective action." This pattern was to be expected, he later asserted, from fearful workers who had been "taught by their churches that salvation is individual, not collective."[45] Although Barkin's argument may have relevance for the workers of Chicopee, it is necessary to modify his generalization in the light of the worker rising of 1934. Modern historians have demonstrated that the pattern of labor relations in the South was much more complex than this assertion implies. It is more accurate to say that the story of labor in Georgia, like that of the South on a regional scale, was much more variegated and nuanced, in that there is no universally applicable standard by which the behavior of workers of all communities may be measured. As this analysis suggests, there were many local situations in which Georgia workers flocked to the union banner in 1934, thus demonstrating that they were open to collective action to redress their grievances. Hence, it would be an error to dismiss them as quiescent by nature or nurture; rather, in differing communities, mill workers devised a variety of strategies for dealing with industrial discipline, ranging from internal support systems and subtle resistance to more open expressions of cultural and economic independence, all without benefit of union representation. Moreover, the struggle of 1934 also ended with stronger union consciousness in some communities, such as Columbus, Dalton, and Augusta, than was evident in other locales, where organization faltered. But the overall theme to be drawn from the great uprising may well be that of frustrated collective aspiration, more than culturally ingrained reluctance to organize.

Although most southern textile workers rose above their cultural proclivities in a fleeting moment of mass mobilization, they were unprepared for the failure of governmental institutions to uphold the guarantees contained in federal labor law. Nor were workers ready for the scourge of unemployment, eviction, and exclusion that followed from the management response to a determined but failed rising. The outcome was the exacerbation of an already dire employment crisis that was to stimulate further efforts to organize the jobless in self-defense. The long-term result of the failed uprising was a legacy of bitterness that has damaged Georgia labor's prospects since the 1930s and produced a distorted account of a significant textile strike that quietly slipped into the realm of lost history. And for the losers, its meaning was a new struggle with the scourge of joblessness, which once again was to focus worker attention on the federal government as employer of last resort.

Serving Jobless Georgians

The New Deal and the Rise of the Unemployed Movement

By early 1935, the great uprising had been suppressed, and it was clear that the outcome for organized workers had been disastrous, whether measured in terms of workplace conditions, lost jobs, evictions, or discrimination in the application of relief policy. Given the brutal and decisive employer response to the UTW organizing drive and the strike that followed, the even-handed application of federal relief policies became an important issue for the strike casualties. The key development of 1935 was the establishment of a new federal works agency, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which expressed the Roosevelt administration's commitment to work relief in response to hard-core unemployment. Although FERA was retained until late 1935, the creation of WPA was part of a sweeping reorganization of relief activities characterized by the abandonment of direct relief in favor of work relief programs. As the new agency took shape, worker organizations slowly turned their attention to the mobilization of the jobless as a pressure group to represent the interests of America's dispossessed. This new emphasis on organizing the unemployed developed against the background of an emerging Popular Front, which resulted in new linkages among Socialists, Communists, and liberals who joined in an antifascist alliance that had important domestic ramifications. For the unemployed, the significance of the new alignments lay in a strengthening of their claims against the government and an increase in pressure exerted on their behalf. While several new groups arose to address the needs of the jobless, existing labor unions

became one important force in the political struggle over aid to the unemployed.

In Georgia, the craft unions moved quickly to articulate their own vision of the systemic economic crisis and the measures necessary to effectively battle unemployment. As early as January 1935, the *Atlanta Journal of Labor* advanced an analysis of the unemployment problem and its possible remedies, which began with endorsement of an across-the-board reduction in work hours that would spread employment. Together with wage increases, this approach was certain to result in a "corresponding increase in purchasing power and consumption." Recognizing that its proposal was not likely to meet a favorable reception among Georgia employers, the union organ expressed the hope that "the country would not be . . . long in waking up to this solution."[1]

In the wake of the textile strike's failure, workers increasingly looked to the federal government for answers to the social and economic problems they faced in their daily lives. For the UTW, reeling from the blows delivered by recalcitrant management, programs such as the WPA became part of the short-term solution to worker impoverishment. For Irene Brooks Elders and her family, surplus commodities and WPA assistance spelled the difference between survival and starvation in Newnan, where helpful relief workers eased the application process. Similarly, in La Grange, locked-out striker Bill Woodham "went up to the union office," where union officials instructed him to report to the WPA for work assignment. In some cases, the local helped union men living under the threat of violence due to their past organizing activities to find alternatives that removed them from dangerous situations. In the case of Robert and John Henry in La Grange, UTW worked with the state FERA office to "permit these families to move to Atlanta and be assigned to WPA projects." Like many Georgians, L. T. Medley concluded that once WPA got under way, "it started picken' up" and that without the Roosevelt work relief program, "a lot of people would have starved to death." The positive response was reflected in Marion "Peanut" Brown's talking blues song:

> Now married life is all right
> if you don't drink likker and stay out at night
> work hard all the week and give your wife the pay,
> keep the good works a goin' antifascist 'til
> judgment day. Marry young, raise children
> and die happy . . . and I mean happy . . .
>
> Now listen, boys, if you want to get rich,
> get a pick and shovel and dig you a ditch.

> You'll learn the yard in a couple of days,
> and gitcha a job on the WPA. Push buggies.
> Shovel mountains.[2]

While workers saw WPA as a godsend, a great concern to organized labor was the maintenance of prevailing wages on both FERA and WPA projects. Unlike FERA clients and CWA employees, WPA workers were to be paid a "security wage" lower than standard wages in their respective localities, a plan intended to prevent workers from leaving private industry to accept government jobs. Predictably, this scheme resulted in opposition within the ranks of organized labor in Georgia. As was true in most other states, AFL affiliates often expressed greater interest in maintaining prevailing wages than in meeting the needs of the unemployed, most of whom lived outside the union family. While union complaints had sometimes come in under FERA, the principle of prevailing wage was normally respected on its relief projects. Yet in early 1935 labor organizations statewide began to attack FERA for allowing relief workers to be paid at wages below NRA code level. When the Trion UTW petitioned Harry Hopkins for higher wages based on NRA standards, however, Washington bureaucrats reminded the union that FERA was not bound by NRA rules and that local wage committees determined prevailing wages.[3]

By spring, as relief workers were shifted to WPA and the security wage, labor unions began to see maintaining the prevailing wage as a matter of vital concern. In April 1935, GFL's A. Steve Nance informed Gay Shepperson that Columbus project workers were "insisting on same rates at Fort Benning for Columbus workers that are being paid them in Columbus by WPA." By July, interest in the issue led the Columbus Central Labor Union to petition Hopkins, demanding that WPA workers receive "established wage rates" that would protect a pay scale local unions had "sacrificed for over a period of years." By October, other Columbus workers had taken matters into their own hands by forming an Unemployed Council, which added an assertion that existing wage scales on WPA were "entirely inadequate to sustain life," not to mention the "suffering and humiliation" caused families by widespread "eviction warrants against the unemployed." In the same month, Columbus Textile Local 2417 protested wage levels and abusive treatment on the projects and called for an investigation of their plight. The union could not believe that "this is the relief that our great president wishes us to receive."[4]

Elsewhere, the security wage produced similar anxiety among Georgia trade unionists. In distant Savannah, Brunswick, and Macon, Public Works Administration (PWA) administrators violated federal standards

by approving wage scales below even the security wage. Upon learning of the problem, A. Steve Nance swung into action with telegrams to Congressman Robert Ramspeck and Senators Richard Russell and Walter George. So egregious was the error that a federal inquiry was immediately launched, side by side with an independent investigation by the AFL Building Trades Division in Washington. To Georgia unionists, the lesson in this incident was absolutely clear: it was "conclusive proof security wages [were] destroying standards." Consequently, Nance maintained, "any government official who approve[d] such rates should be removed."[5]

Complaints about WPA rates and procedures were voiced in all areas of the state. From the Augusta City Council and Board of Commissioners came appeals to restore FERA employment, while the city's Central Labor Union protested the WPA assignment system. And wages were never far from the surface of the ongoing relief debate. One group of 380 Augusta project workers appealed to Hopkins to "see to us getting the scale of wages you propriated [*sic*] for us." Elsewhere, other unionists expressed concern over changes in FERA programming as well. In Shannon, UTW workers argued for traditional relief or higher wages, arguing that Floyd County citizens were being discriminated against because of their union affiliations. And in nearby Rome, WPA workers organized to demand higher wages but hinted that they might be forced to "steal in order to live." Likewise, in rural Cedartown, a new "United Band of Workers" formed to demand an increase in project wages. Further north, members of the United Mine Workers of America in Durham protested the denial of relief to striking miners seeking from the coal operators the same extension of contract as prevailed on a nationwide basis. Finally, in urban Rossville, the Hod Carriers' Building and Common Laborers' Union forged an alliance with the local jobless to demand a wage scale appropriate to local conditions.[6] Here organized labor joined with the local Relief Workers' Association to mobilize WPA workers to advance the cause of the unemployed seeking a living wage. In these varied situations, it is possible to discern the beginnings of an increasingly militant movement to organize the jobless for action, as labor unions and independent groups addressed the casualties of a collapsed economy.

As previously noted, the Georgia Federation of Labor and its leader, A. Steve Nance, had already become alarmed at the new WPA wage standards, which building trades unions feared would undercut the prevailing wage. Acknowledging the potentially detrimental impact of the security wage, AFL president William Green informed Nance that he was "doing everything possible to secure the application of better labor standards than those originally announced." Yet there were limits to organized

labor's options, in view of the Roosevelt administration's ongoing effort to discontinue direct relief as a policy. Responding to Nance's entreaties as well as an inquiry from Georgia congressman Robert Ramspeck, the WPA's Nels Anderson acknowledged "the conditions protested against in Mr. Nance's letter," but he insisted that the national government was determined to "get out of the relief program." Anderson maintained that the first step in this process was a "works program with a so-called 'security wage'" that was intended to be a "relief wage" clearly distinguishable from prevailing rates.[7]

The tensions created by the shift to work relief and a security wage continued to simmer during the late summer months, both in Georgia and elsewhere in the United States. In August, when a WPA strike threatened to halt construction activity in New York, Shepperson reported that in Georgia, no such protest action had taken place. When Harry Hopkins noted that "there may be a lot of people threatening strikes," she took the occasion to remind him that Nance had been persistent in his criticism of the security wage. Meanwhile, despite Communist leadership in the local unemployed movement, AFL representative Hollihan actively worked hand in hand with the Atlanta radicals to "help the relief workers organize into an Unemployment Council." Given the unresolved issue, a crisis was not long in coming. In October 1935 the Georgia Federation of Labor and the Atlanta Building Trades Council warned that they could not "condone a policy that will permit a federal agency to destroy economic standards and wipe out all of the gains made for workers and their families through many years of heroic labor struggles." The state federation told Shepperson that while it would allow its members to be enrolled in WPA programs pending an appeal to the WPA Labor Board in Washington, it was prepared to "mobilize [its] economic force" in the absence of an adjustment. Two weeks later, the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterer's International Union cited the Georgia protest and promised FERA's Jacob Baker that unless a reduction in work hours raised the effective rate, he could "look for strikes and stoppages of work in all trades in the city of Atlanta." Meanwhile, GFL called a WPA strike for October 15 but agreed to meet with Shepperson for further discussion of the issue. This meeting produced no settlement, since federal policy took precedence; the Federation now agreed to temporarily swallow the security wage "under protest."[8]

An uneasy truce followed, but the rapprochement was short-lived. When further negotiations failed, Nance and J. A. Harper of the Georgia Federation of Trades called a mass meeting of Fulton and DeKalb county unionists and project workers for November 5. At the appointed hour

over 1,700 WPA workers voted unanimously to strike one week later, if concessions on the prevailing wage were not offered. For the Federation, opposition to the security wage was the central issue, as was the demand for parity with northern workers, who received higher wages commensurate with living costs. Union labor maintained that the prevailing wage could be implemented not by revenue increases but by the reduction of hours worked. However, the meeting's sponsors were not unmindful of their new constituents' needs. Thus, the assemblage also demanded that all unemployed workers be placed on the FERA rolls until they could be put to work on WPA projects. Focusing attention on Shepperson's intransigence, Nance told the crowd that the GFL would "do its utmost to help you reach your goal."[9]

The following day, Nance informed WPA officials in Washington of the project workers' demands, emphasizing prevailing wage, reduced hours, transitional assignment to FERA, and opposition to transfer of office workers to unskilled positions. While GFL did not "desire controversy," he maintained, "unless some action [was] taken for adjustment, [a] strike [was] certain." The Federation insisted that it fought "not for money, but for the opportunity for people to work and to maintain the standards which organized labor [had] established." Echoing Nance's argument, the *Atlanta Journal of Labor* claimed that labor was "not trying to grab anything" but was "simply trying to prevent the breakdown of standards." In a follow-up telegram, Nance told Jacob Baker that Georgia workers were entitled to equal treatment with workers elsewhere, emphasizing GFL's insistence on removing the North-South wage differential. Meanwhile, according to W. M. Walsh of the Atlanta Operating Engineers, "all of the local unions in Georgia [were] asking the Internationals to help in the struggle to maintain the rate on WPA work."[10]

From Shepperson's perspective the picture was more complicated. Confessing to Hopkins that she was now "a little worried" about the impending work stoppage, she reported that Nance and Harper had "called this strike" but had not "got it under control." She noted that relatively few of the project workers were actually members of his union. Moreover, she added, the prospective strikers were both black and white, which prompted Hopkins to warn that Nance had "better watch out or he will be having some race riots." To Hopkins, it was bad policy to have Nance "thinking he can threaten and bulldoze" WPA administrators; his advice was to "tell Nance to go jump in the lake." In the final analysis, Shepperson simply did not think that Nance had the authority or support to "pull the strike." If the strike actually occurred, Shepperson told Hopkins, WPA would have local public sentiment "absolutely with us."[11]

As rumors of a strike spread from Atlanta to outlying areas of the state, Shepperson's negotiations with labor leaders continued. While she "talked very sympathetically," she insisted that she was unable to pay substantially more without cutting projects. Using the authority she had, she did grant a 10 percent pay increase to unskilled workers in Atlanta. Beyond this, the issues were subject to adjudication in Washington; and Hopkins finally agreed to readjust wages to reflect a uniform national scale. Not all observers endorsed worker demands. In Atlanta, for example, the Associated Contractors' Georgia branch took this opportunity to urge the end of WPA, which, it believed, had "preempted the local and future market for the legitimate contractor." Dismissive of this private interest, the Roosevelt administration had no intention of accepting any proposal to "abolish WPA in this state." While it conceded that WPA should not be a "permanent proposition," the *Journal of Labor* accurately reflected public endorsement of the government "taking up the slack in private industry."[12]

With these modest concessions, the strike threat evaporated. Yet organized labor had made some gains through advocacy of aid to the jobless (and the preservation of its cherished principle of prevailing wage). To Brehon Somervell, a WPA consultant based in Florida, the entire incident "merely spurred labor to demand further concessions," this time focusing on PWA wages, which were now lower than WPA levels for skilled labor. According to Somervell, Nance had sent the GFL's George Googe on a trip throughout the Southeast to "foment protests against the present wage scale." He predicted that as a result of the concessions made, "a repetition of what has occurred in Georgia [could] be expected in Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Florida." He recommended against further concessions because "labor [was] never satisfied."[13] Others saw another future. Like many urban mayors, Atlanta mayor James L. Key wrote Senator Richard Russell to urge more federal action to relieve "much confusion and actual suffering" in his city. Key hoped for more liberal assignment policies, larger allotments, and supplementary relief to wage earners earning the "alleged security wage." Focusing on the plight of reassigned white-collar workers, the *Atlanta Daily World* welcomed labor peace but insisted that it was "up to WPA to supply jobs to as many as possible." Behind the *World*'s concern lay an awareness of WPA's disproportionate reassignments of black skilled workers to unskilled positions, the inevitable consequence of African American displacement as well as the limited number of skilled positions available on the projects. Finally, Nance launched another investigation of wage discrimination by WPA officials in Savannah, Brunswick, and Macon, where even the security wage

was not being enforced. The state federation promised to "prevent the working of men and women . . . for less than enough to sustain life."[14] Organized labor's success with the use of the strike threat had clearly emboldened its leaders to expand its reach and carry on the fight.

One test of GFL's concern for the welfare of all workers lay in the level of its interest in African American laborers, many of whom had joined the mass meeting that had embraced the strike. Discrimination against black workers had a long history reaching back to NRA's differential rates and denial of relief assignments, injustices accepted by Georgia's white craft unionists. Yet it is possible to see Nance moving in a more liberal direction in 1935, particularly in his decision to forge links with unemployed workers regardless of skills. As will be seen, Nance would eventually break with the AFL over his conviction that industrial unionism incorporating all textile workers held the key to the growth of labor in Georgia. His evolving progressivism enabled him to publicly embrace the African American unemployed in late 1935. More predictably, major race organizations such as the Atlanta Urban League and the NAACP were alert to evidence of racial discrimination in the unfolding WPA program. The Augusta NAACP, meanwhile, lodged a vigorous protest with Walter White in Washington over documented differences in the level of relief payments for blacks and whites. Likewise, Walker County black workers organized themselves and crafted a petition charging that in La Fayette, African Americans were denied relief as a matter of policy. And the Atlanta Negro Workers Council charged that the WPA wage scale held the potential for "untold exploitation" of black workers. Organized under the aegis of the Urban League, the purpose of the Council was "to corral Negro workers for intelligent understanding and direction of their own problems."[15]

For African Americans the transition from FERA and direct relief to WPA work relief was a moment of opportunity. New Deal bureaucrats, especially a committed band of Atlanta-based social workers, were determined to break the back of Georgia's depressed wage levels and incorporate African Americans into the social welfare state on a level of economic parity with white workers. While they failed to remove Jim Crow, they did succeed in providing the black community needed services and ensuring greater access to work relief programs. Like-minded leaders of the black middle class also saw WPA as a potential boon to the black unemployed, if the program proved to be administered fairly. The *Atlanta Daily World* thus greeted the transition to work relief in 1935 with enthusiasm tempered by suspicion over early reports of discrimination in job assignment. The voice of Atlanta's black elite rejected the

"dole" that "paralyzed our people" while insisting that there be "no discrimination in the affording of bread." The socially active Neighborhood Union (NU) also regarded WPA as a great opportunity to enhance black employment and contribute to social uplift. The organization's activists concluded that the NU "ought to get in on this." As a consequence, the group expressed deep concern over the absence of African Americans on WPA's local advisory body. Urging the appointment of a black adviser to the local WPA on "Negro problems," NU hoped that in this way African Americans could be "best adjusted . . . to the best advantage."[16]

There is ample evidence that a stronger African American voice in WPA administration was needed, starting with ongoing allegations of racial discrimination in the form of a wage differential. Equally disturbing to elite groups, black skilled workers, and middle-class critics was the wholesale reassignment of black skilled workers and white-collar employees to unskilled labor on WPA, together with their consistent placement under the supervision of less-skilled white managers. These practices induced local black organizations to make further demands on WPA officials. The Urban League spearheaded these protests, as did a new African American skilled workers organization, the Atlanta Boosters League, which focused on racial discrimination in assignment and supervision. In April 1935, the Boosters League filed a petition from fifteen black craft workers claiming that regardless of positions applied for, African Americans were "listed as unskilled laborers and assigned to unskilled jobs." League chairman A. J. Williams of Atlanta also told Harry Hopkins that "when it comes to supervisory and foremanship, [blacks] were being brazenly discriminated against, regardless of efficiency." Charging that skilled workers were not getting a "fair break" on the projects, the Boosters League asserted that "they are talking the New Deal here in Georgia, and practicing the old deal."[17]

Persistent discrimination meant that the Atlanta Urban League had "a devil of a time with the WPA," which led it into cooperation with the Georgia Federation of Labor during the prevailing wage debate that preceded the mass meeting and strike threat in November 1935. The Urban League's executive secretary, Reginald Johnson, reported to the League's national office that there was a serious and immediate strike threat, which had united six thousand white and black relief clients in a demonstration at the Atlanta relief offices. While Johnson had documented evidence of black displacement, wage discrimination, abusive supervision, and reassignment of skilled workers to unskilled labor, his most notable observation was the acknowledgment of momentary unity among defiant white and black project workers. Reinforcing this point, Johnson told the

Atlanta Daily World that he was confident that if a strike materialized, "a major portion of colored workers [would] join hands with the white leaders."[18] The project workers' strike crisis revealed that in moments of acute economic distress, there was potential for cross-racial collaboration when class interests narrowed the racial gap. From the first stirrings of discontent in late summer, the Urban League had foreseen the possibility of working-class unity on relief issues, as evidenced in the first WPA strike in New York. At that time, the League alerted AFL to the danger of blacks turning "Red" over the problem of unemployment and the equitable distribution of jobs.[19] In Atlanta, the potential for the emergence of at least a temporary interracial working-class alliance was present in November 1935.

Although the WPA demonstrations had been orchestrated by the Georgia Federation of Labor and the building trades leadership, other more radical organizations were conscious of opportunity in the problems of jobless and forgotten men and women. Foremost among them was the Communist Party, which had been an underlying force in the Atlanta unemployed movement since 1932. And by 1934 Clyde Johnson was back in Atlanta, working to organize the city's Unemployed Councils, the party's lead organization on the jobless front. On at least three occasions, Johnson was approached by project workers with complaints about working conditions and workplace safety; to a party organizer strikes were "the obvious thing to do." The project workers agreed with his analysis, which meant that at one point three work stoppages were under way at the same time. In another case, Johnson made all preparations for a mass demonstration for greater relief payments at City Hall; he remembered that with these labor actions going on, "all of a sudden they started settling the strikes," including the restoration of withdrawn welfare payments. So active was Johnson in the project strikes and relief demonstrations that he quickly became a hunted man in the Atlanta vicinity. Johnson understood that African Americans "had the most pressing problems" and that "if you were going to deal with black problems you were going to deal with WPA or you deal with welfare." He maintained that because of the "catastrophic" unemployment problem among blacks, it was possible to persuade them to unite with whites during the November WPA strike crisis.[20] While the AFL provided the public face for that event, it is clear that Communist Party activists worked at the grassroots level to help generate the united front support that prompted Hopkins's and Shepperson's concessions. In short, the Party's appeal was widespread among working-class African Americans, and even some ambivalent middle-class blacks could visualize political radicals as an "out-

sider group" that might advance the cause of their economic liberation. As Karen Ferguson has observed, many black Atlantans welcomed Communist "support for their battles for inclusion and citizenship."[21]

Despite the party's growing appeal and "worsening conditions" among the jobless, the Communist Party unemployed organizers struggled in early 1935 to build an interracial worker movement. In an unusually pessimistic report on unemployment, one party organizer acknowledged that the party's Unemployment Council was at its "lowest ebb" in months. He attributed the lack of progress to the "extreme terror" that had landed "militant workers" in jail, as well as poor organizational work and ineffective local leadership. Many councils had been "built around individuals" who often cooperated with FERA officials, thus defeating the "collective work" which had been neglected. While he saw "some little progress," in unemployed work, District Organizer Nat Ross complained to the Central Committee in New York that party workers "have a tough job down here." Recognizing that local comrades bore primary responsibility for "building the Party in the South," Ross nonetheless argued that New York had paid too little attention to District 17, where there were multiple problems, including an urgent need for an ILD organizer in Atlanta.[22]

While Communist unemployed work advanced slowly, some Georgia comrades saw substantial progress in the effort to expand the party's influence. In a letter from Atlanta, one party enthusiast insisted that "workers [were] on the march." This "unrest" was especially evident in Atlanta and La Grange, due to the severe hardships imposed on union workers following the textile strike of 1934. Disillusioned with ineffective union leaders, some locked out workers at the Fulton Bag Mill were asking how they could "get in touch with some of the Red leaders who can tell them what the Reds stand for." Another textile worker, bemoaning the speedup that was "killing" employed mill operatives in Atlanta, urged the *Southern Worker* to increase distribution in the worker community, where the paper "has GOT to reach everybody." In preparation for May Day 1935, the Young Communist League circulated a leaflet calling on southern workers to "unite to prevent our South being destroyed by the robbing Wall Street parasites and the Southern capitalists." Forecasting a bitter fight, these activists argued that there was "no other way except the way proposed by the Communist Party."[23]

At this crucial moment in summer 1935, Comintern secretary general Georgi Dimitrov articulated a new international party line that marked a sharp break from the past, calling for an antifascist alliance among Communists, Socialists, and bourgeois-democratic forces. In the United

States, this shift facilitated collaboration between Communists and other progressive forces on the domestic scene. Southern radicals seized this opportunity to advance cooperation on labor issues. By September, as the Communist Party was moving into its Popular Front phase, District 17 party authorities endorsed work with the AFL "to organize the unemployed and build between employed and unemployed, skilled and unskilled." This was the opening shot in the battle to "mobilize the WPA workers" against the "coolie wage scale," which was a Communist Party reference to the unpopular security wage as well as the sectional differential that had angered southern unionists and project workers alike. Communist leaders in Birmingham now acknowledged their "mistakes and shortcomings in the past," including neglect of the churches and the regrettable "tendency to regard work in the trade unions and reformist organizations as 'too difficult' to implement." Within one month, the WPA strike had taken center stage and the District 17 newsletter reported a "militant spirit" among project workers ready to resist "Roosevelt's hunger program" by striking. Again embracing the united front, the party now exhorted "comrades in the AFL unions" to force the organization of the jobless in the knowledge that "bad conditions for the unemployed means bad conditions for all workers."[24] Within one month the AFL had engineered the prevailing wage demonstrations, with the full support of Communist unionists and organizers.

Although party inroads into the unions and unemployed groups brought encouraging results, on one front Communists scored a truly significant propaganda victory, namely the battle to free Angelo Herndon. Herndon's incarceration remained an important symbol to the unemployed, who saw in his plight a mirror of their own misery. Atlanta's African Americans especially identified with Herndon, whose prosecution threatened civil liberties and promised to cripple efforts to improve their status in the South. While the case was on appeal before the Supreme Court, the party launched a drive to secure two million signatures on a protest petition to Talmadge, a campaign also intended to bring signers into the ILD and the Communist Party. By October 1935, the ILD petition had been signed by nearly a half million Americans, though in Georgia a modest 496 names had been gathered. Shortly before he was to surrender to Georgia authorities, Herndon proclaimed that the South was "becoming a different South from what it has been." He maintained that black and white workers were uniting in a class alliance, which would soon end "tyrannical rule." It was the insurrection law's sweeping threat to dissent that helped unite middle-class organizations with the radicals who drove the Herndon defense. Working side by side with the militant

Joint Committee to Aid the Herndon Defense (and subordinating the issue of Communism), the ACLU, NAACP, AFL, mainstream churches, and liberal organizations combined to oppose Georgia's vigorous assault on free speech, mounting a campaign that ultimately ended in Herndon's release when the United States Supreme Court declared the Insurrection Law unconstitutional.[25] For Georgia Communists, the case was a bright spot in a sometimes dark picture.

While the Herndon case commanded media attention, Communist organizers continued their tireless effort to cooperate with union groups and Socialists on all labor fronts. Since May 1935, for example, the aggressive Sharecroppers Union (SCU) had been pursuing a collaborative agreement with the Socialist-dominated Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU). As the SCU prepared for a strike in July 1935, Al Jackson, a Communist Party activist and SCU secretary, wrote STFU leader J. R. Butler promising a "united front appeal" to both STFU and the Farmers Union in Alabama. For its part, the STFU house organ, *Sharecroppers Voice*, declared that the Communist and Socialist organizations were "as one in their united struggle against their common oppressors—the planters and the plantation interests of the South." In fact, STFU, which made few significant inroads into Georgia, resisted an alliance with SCU, due to Communist influence in the latter group as well as sharp leadership conflicts. Stubborn but effective opposition to a SCU alliance had been mounted by STFU Socialists under the leadership of the experienced H. L. Mitchell, all of them wary of Communist influence in SCU. Already a powerful force in rural Alabama, the SCU had moved into west Georgia in the summer and fall of 1935, a result mirroring that organization's militant activism in its Alabama base communities, their proximity to the state line, and a person-to-person "telegraph" system for transmitting union news. The clandestine communications system enabled African Americans to maintain a "hidden transcript" of resistance that reinforced ties with the union without appearing on the "public transcript" available to the wider community, including their white overlords. While few open locals were organized in Georgia, SCU propaganda was widely circulated, and there was a definite quickening of subterranean interest in union organizing among African American tenants and sharecroppers.[26]

Although an effective united front failed to materialize in isolated rural areas, there were more promising developments among labor and the unemployed. In May 1935, Highlander's James Dombrowski issued a call for an "All-Southern Conference for Civil and Trade Union Rights," endorsed by both Socialists and Communists and dedicated to the advancement of labor and unemployed organizing in the South. Scheduled to meet

in Chattanooga in late May, the conference embraced the organization of urban labor, unemployed workers, and struggling rural sharecroppers, as well as the causes of the political prisoners Angelo Herndon and the Scottsboro boys. The eight Georgia delegates, drawn from the International Workers Order and ILD, as well as textile and auto unions, were especially active on behalf of the Scottsboro boys and Angelo Herndon. Comrade Young, an Atlanta African American, called for a resolution to the Supreme Court, stressing the argument that only through interracial unity could workers overcome official repression. The delegates also embraced the right of all workers, including the unemployed, to organize without interference. And predictably, there was a call for a "united front of all agricultural workers," another attempt to bring about the unification of SCU and STFU. Once again, while SCU led the national fight for organizational unity, Socialists H. L. Mitchell and Norman Thomas contented themselves with progress toward the "destruction of the artificial division between Negro and white workers fostered by the ruling class." Although a mixture of liberals, radicals, educators, and social gospel clergy was present, mainstream labor unions were underrepresented. The result was a rude awakening for Communists and Socialists to the reality of their weakness among southern progressives.[27]

The labor unity meeting, forced to move to Highlander as a result of American Legion pressure in Chattanooga, was an early expression of the drive to create a Popular Front consistent with the changed Moscow party line, as well as the Socialists' tentative gestures in the direction of cooperation among radicals. In Georgia, however, Socialists proceeded from a historically weak base. Unrealistically optimistic about southern prospects, the national party sent labor leaders Paul Porter and Clarence Senior to Georgia in May 1935 in hopes of revitalizing a struggling movement. Although they claimed to have found a "spirit of restlessness" and "great" interest in Socialism, they readily admitted that Socialist Party organization was ineffective at best. The missionaries viewed Columbus as one important area of opportunity, especially among Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW) strikers, whose leaders were "interested in the Socialist philosophy and program." Even more impressive was progress reportedly being made in Atlanta, where labor attorney Joe Jacobs, a prominent figure in the Georgia labor movement who served as counsel to the ACW, worked through the Workman's Circle and the unions to lay the foundations of a revived Socialist Party local. Prospects in Atlanta seemed to brighten, in view of the "decidedly friendly" attitude of GFL's A. Steve Nance. In reality, the Socialist Party in Georgia was moribund, composed primarily of middle-class supporters and the labor Socialists

in the Workman's Circle. Moreover, efforts to build a united front suffered due to the reluctance of most southern Socialists to collaborate with Communists.[28]

An exception to the pattern of Socialist suspicion was to be found among the Highlander activists, who remained open to cooperation among all radicals. The central role of James Dombrowski in planning the All South Conference on Labor and Civil Rights symbolized the pragmatic attitude of the Highlander group. Communist Party internal correspondence reveals that the Communist Party was alive to the opportunity thus presented. A central feature of the party's overtures toward the Socialists was its initiative in unemployed work in north Georgia and southeastern Tennessee. In January 1936, Tennessee Communist leader Ted Wellman informed Herbert Benjamin, the party's national director of unemployed organizing, that great strides were being made in the north Georgia WPA district, including the establishment of a united front with the Hod Carriers and Common Laborers Union and WPA recognition of the union and its project committees. At the same time, Wellman reported negotiating victories at Fort Oglethorpe and Rossville, where the union won equal pay rates with Chattanooga WPA workers, thus replacing the previous Georgia rural rates.[29]

Directly addressing the united front, Wellman advanced the idea of Communists moving into the Socialist Party Workers Alliance to build a strong unemployed organization. A product of Socialist organizing, especially in the Midwest and Northeast, the Workers Alliance had emerged by 1935 as the most dynamic force in the national unemployed movement, eclipsing the more sectarian Communist Party Unemployment Councils, and it seemed a logical vehicle for the perfection of the united front sought by Wellman and the District 17 Communists. While Wellman focused on opportunities for cooperation in Tennessee, the policy he favored was also implemented in the north Georgia WPA district. Wellman pointedly noted that the "SP [in Tennessee] works very well with us," and argued that the agreement to affiliate Communist unemployed groups with the Workers Alliance would be a key indicator of an emergent "general SP-CP front." Jobless organizers regarded the crucial issue for southern WPA workers as "the whole policy of wage differentials against the South." Wellman saw this problem as a justification for an All-Southern WPA Workers Conference as well as a South-wide WPA strike. In preparation for these initiatives, he favored unity of unemployed organizations through affiliation with the increasingly dominant Workers Alliance, which was consistent with the Communist Party's national policy line on both the unemployed and the Popular Front. With

southern WPA workers "disgusted everywhere" and "hankering for a means to express their feelings," a unified national unemployed union seemed a logical step.[30]

Pressing the case for unity, Wellman also wrote the Communist Party Trade Union Committee and Organizing Commission to describe his plan to address the Socialist Party State Executive Committee with a proposal for a "united front," which he insisted was held back only because of propaganda from "reptiles" on the Socialist National Executive Committee, where the conservative old guard held sway. He promised to urge joint work in organizing unemployed workers and relief recipients, perhaps through the Workers Alliance. Wellman also reported that the Socialist Party was in favor of a farmer-labor party in 1936, but acknowledged that "the CP will not be permitted at this stage of the game to become a member group in the movement." Undaunted, he maintained that the party would play a major role in that effort through its "people in the unions and organizations." Having argued for unification of unemployed organizations, Wellman then asked for instructions on further work with the Workers Alliance and on the feasibility of an all-southern WPA strike.[31]

When Wellman, state secretary of the Communist Party, finally spoke to the Tennessee Socialist Party state executive committee, he called for not only "cordial and friendly relations" on the basis of "mutual respect," but also concrete "joint work." He reported to New York that the Tennessee Socialists were receptive and that state secretary Laurent Frantz endorsed "action on the united front." Moving to the central issue of unemployed work, the Socialists embraced the idea of an All-Southern WPA Conference, to be organized under the leadership of Wellman and Frantz. As a follow-up, existing jobless organizations, including the Hod Carriers, Workers Alliance, and unaligned Relief Workers Association, issued a call to all unemployed and WPA workers in the southern states urging them to attend a mass meeting featuring a prominent national unemployed leader, either the Unemployment Councils' Benjamin or David Lasser of the Workers Alliance. The Communist Party's hidden agenda was to persuade conferees to launch a "Southwide strike for equal wages with the North." Its other objective was to stage a united front meeting that would match the national unity convention that would soon bring all of the nation's unemployed organizations together under the umbrella organization of the Workers Alliance of America (WAA). Both goals were embraced by the national party's Trade Union Commission, which favored the All-Southern conference and promised to send Herbert Benjamin as a key speaker if the event materialized. The commission saw

progress toward a united front with Socialists and the staging of an All-Southern WPA Conference as matters of "great importance."[32]

Despite Communist optimism, tensions remained among southern Socialists. Workers Alliance organizer Hilliard Bernstein warned Clarence Senior in February 1936 that it was time to "stir up these SP members in the South to give us more support" because "the Commies will get us if they don't wake up." Bernstein, an experienced southern unemployed organizer, asserted that the Communists were "everywhere, worming in with their new line and building more and more influence." Meanwhile, speaking for the Highlander radicals, Myles Horton told Nat Ross that Wellman was "in danger of destroying the excellent work he has done" by "pushing things too fast" and thus opening himself to criticism. Horton was asked by several liberals to "keep Ted from wrecking the Hod Carriers Union and exposing Chattanooga CP members and sympathizers." Concerned that Wellman's success had "gone to his head," the cautious Horton urged the party to warn the zealot that he was undermining the cause of unemployed organizing. Behind the criticism was Horton's objection to Wellman's efforts to move into Grundy County, where Highlander had already built a strong unemployed movement, to take control of WPA organizing. Unless he learned to "stay in the background," Horton argued, Wellman would certainly be "strangled."[33] These comments suggest that local opinion in north Georgia and southeastern Tennessee was divided on the rapidly developing effort to build a united front.

Southern efforts at collaboration among unemployed organizations grew side by side with the national unity movement. In addition to the Unemployment Councils and Workers Alliance, the National Unemployed League expressed interest in the southern field. While its strength was primarily in the Ohio Valley states of Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, the Trotskyist-led Unemployed League asserted that its "ultimate goal" was the "organization of the Negroes and Whites together, even in the Deep South." Like the Alliance and the Councils, the League was moving inexorably toward unity among organizations in 1936. This trend culminated in a national unity meeting of April 1936, held in Washington, D.C. At the Washington convention of all national unemployed groups, a new, enlarged Workers Alliance of America effectively absorbed all other organizations, though national leadership of the new body was shared by Socialist president David Lasser and Communist secretary Herbert Benjamin. While the South remained a prime area for new organization, the relative weakness of Georgia unemployed groups was confirmed by their lack of representation at the Workers Alliance national gathering, at which Elly Hawks of Atlanta served as

the state's single delegate. The All Southern WPA and Relief Workers Conference in Chattanooga mirrored the national unity movement. Meeting in Chattanooga March 21 and 22, the southern body brought together unemployed activists from Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Arkansas in a Popular Front display of consensus behind the Communist Party–endorsed Frazier-Lundeen Unemployment Insurance Bill and a new proposal for sweeping relief legislation sponsored by New York congressman Vito Marcantonio. Georgia delegates stressed the corrosive effect of the security wage on local standards and the devastating effect of lockouts following the textile strike of 1934. However, the most significant outcome for the South was the convention's plans to work for an increase in the wages of southern project workers in order to erase the sectional differential and move toward the prevailing wage in all southern locales.[34]

The southern WPA conference was judged a success by Communist observers, who expressed gratification that the "Red scare was not raised there at all." Socialists were equally pleased, with one party delegate remarking that the convention had been "entirely above board," its program "carried off within AFL bounds with the approval of the CLU [Central Labor Union] in Chattanooga." He added that the Communists, aware of the "Red Scare" in the area, "kept [themselves] pretty well in the background." The conference coincided with the expression of increased optimism by unemployed organizers on the national scene, who were energized by the formation of the unified Workers Alliance. Alliance organizer Dave Benson noted that at the Washington conference, the Communists had "conceded many points to make the unity possible" and that the new Communist Popular Front party line had "done wonders for the old line men." Just prior to the unity meeting in Washington, the evolving Workers Alliance created a southern organizing committee composed of Socialists Hilliard Bernstein, who had been at the Chattanooga conference; Benson, an experienced southern unemployed organizer; and Paul Rasmussen, who had pioneered the Socialist's creation of the original Workers Alliance in Wisconsin and Illinois. Recognizing that the South had been "the weakest link in the mighty chain of Workers Alliance affiliates," the Alliance announced that "the fight [was] on" as it pushed into the southern antilabor stronghold, "bringing hope to oppressed workers, both black and white," and "paving the way for unionization campaigns by AFL unions." Preparing for the struggle, Benson told H. L. Mitchell that he would do what he could for the STFU when he entered "the Godforsaken country of Georgia" as part of the Alliance's intention to "invade the South."[35]

While a united front was slowly forming among unemployed organizations, the Share Croppers Union experienced less success in its proposed collaboration with Socialist farm groups. Their failure was not for lack of trying. In 1934 and 1935, the SCU had made overtures to the STFU for a united front agreement that would join the two radical farm organizations in the struggle against the planters. Again in 1936 merger proposals were advanced, but H. L. Mitchell and other STFU board members continued to resist amalgamation with either SCU or the Farmers Union (FU). In March, Alabama Communists urged Mitchell to support a unity agreement, and in July, the SCU proposed a detailed program for joint organizational efforts, increased relief payments, resistance to evictions, and cooperative defense measures; but the clever Socialist kept his distance. While STFU strength was concentrated in Arkansas, it did venture into the Georgia field in what proved a fruitless effort. As early as January 1936, L. J. Walker of Alamo in south central Georgia launched an organizing campaign in his area, but there is no evidence of success. More active in the state was the Share Croppers Union, which had been organizing in Georgia since 1931, especially in border areas. When SCU merged with the Alabama Farmers Union, it turned over its Georgia locals to the FU and concentrated its own efforts on Alabama sharecroppers and field laborers.[36]

Although SCU continued its efforts to create a united front by joining with the STFU, there was little hope for such an outcome as long as H. L. Mitchell was the key figure in the Tenant Farmers Union. While Mitchell stayed in touch with some SCU organizers and claimed to admire both Lem Harris's and Clyde Johnson's work, he remained suspicious of the Communist Party's national agricultural union leader, Donald Henderson, and the party's more doctrinaire adherents. A committed Socialist, Mitchell consistently rebuffed the SCU's unity initiatives, especially after its merger with the Farmers Union. Reacting to the suggested alliance, Mitchell asserted that the STFU had done more in two years than FU had in forty. He urged Clyde Johnson and his organization to "forget about theory" and "go about building a real union, like he [had] started in Alabama." Mitchell especially disapproved of SCU's decision to allow wage laborers to go into the AFL, while sharecroppers and tenants entered the Farmers Union. The SCU merger plan, thundered the *Sharecroppers Voice*, was "not a call for unity" but rather showed the "way to disunity and disaster." The STFU organ angrily protested the separation of wage laborers from sharecroppers, whose "interests [were] the same."[37] The proposed agreement would have meant the effective end of the STFU as an organizational entity, as well as the eventual absorption of the SCU.

Even more important in the final analysis was ideology. Despite common goals and Mitchell's admiration for the Communist Party's "ability to get things done to publicize situations," STFU was unable to rise above its deep suspicion of the Communists. Mitchell told New Dealer Gardner Jackson that his personal investigation of SCU had not convinced him that a viable union existed, even in Alabama, which made STFU "leery of them." Ultimately, Mitchell's observations were the primary "basis for refusing to amalgamate the two unions." Mitchell insisted that "we [didn't] want to join forces with the Communist Party, Socialist Party, or any other damn party," a disingenuous claim in view of his own political credentials. Convinced that "the CP runs things," he maintained that the fundamental goal of STFU was to simply "have a labor union."[38] Although the STFU board favored merger, Mitchell succeeded in blocking collaboration, in effect dooming the development of a fully united front among tenant and sharecropper organizations.

While rural Popular Fronters floundered and WPA activists in north Georgia gravitated toward the Chattanooga proponents of a united front among project workers, unemployed organizers and labor's advocates struggled to meet the needs of the jobless elsewhere in the state. In widely dispersed areas, Communist efforts to reach workers went forward. In February 1936, a teacher in the WPA Workers Education project in Smyrna resigned in protest of a program in which captive farmers and workers were allegedly "drilled in Communism, class hatred, and racial strife." By this time Hosea Hudson had returned to Atlanta, where he quickly became the "key Negro Communist" in the city. FBI informants reported that Hudson was hard at work holding meetings in African American districts and "spreading propaganda among the Negro race." Meanwhile, in Douglas, college student Samuel Liederman succeeded in organizing a Communist Party cell composed of six blacks in a community situation that was "fertile for much Communist propaganda." It is clear that the Communist Party presence in the Atlanta vicinity had been well established as a result of its aggressive organizing in the early 1930s, thus producing an ambivalent response from the black middle class as well as marked enthusiasm within the larger African American working-class population.[39]

For their part, elite organizations chose to compete with the Communist Party in an effort to advance the interests of the African American population. The Atlanta Urban League, for example, worked through its national organization to urge the employment of blacks in white-collar jobs, which had been consistently denied them. In January 1936, Reginald Johnson of the Atlanta branch called the problem to the attention of

Executive Secretary T. Arnold Hill, asking that he lobby WPA officials in Washington to place blacks on upcoming WPA survey projects. In March, however, the Urban League shifted its attention to the broader problems of the black working class. Speaking in Atlanta, Lester B. Granger of the national Urban League asserted that the real answer to the black labor problem lay in organized action:

> The solution of the Negro workers' problem is in organization. There is no release or rescue except from within the ranks. This organization should be nationwide. Problems come to Negroes not because they are black, but because they are black workers. They must get together, leave out personal opinions, and find the common basis for these problems. Then the problems should be attacked at the sources.[40]

One response to his suggestion came when the Atlanta Negro Workers Council, closely allied with the Atlanta Urban League, moved to endorse the Frazier-Lundeen Bill in April as the only measure that provided an "adequate federal system of unemployment insurance, old age pensions, and other forms of social insurance." This step was an indirect gesture in the direction of the Popular Front, since radical organizations had embraced Frazier-Lundeen as the best comprehensive solution to the problems of the unemployed. Meanwhile, discrimination against black workers was addressed by the NAACP, which lodged a protest in Washington over alleged discrimination against black women in the Valdosta WPA program, including racially biased closure of the sewing projects and assignment of women to outside labor. And in Atlanta, African American Bricklayers Union #9 objected to WPA's unwillingness to allow its members to have their relief cases reopened, despite widespread joblessness. Speaking for black bricklayers, painters, plumbers, and carpenters, the union complained that since WPA had been set up, "a great majority [had] been refused employment," and "our men have been refused the privilege of having their cases opened." Finally, in an action true to form, A. Steve Nance, the GFL, and Atlanta's building trades unions relentlessly focused their attention on the maintenance of prevailing wages, though they were less active in assisting the larger army of the unemployed.[41]

As of January 1937, the building trades remained fixed on Nance's obsession. President Dick Hudson of the Atlanta Building Trades Council appealed to the AFL Building Trades Department with a claim that union workers were gradually being removed from the projects, which he argued resulted in an assault on wage standards as well as discrimination against unionists. In turn, the national office brought the Atlanta situation to the attention of Harry Hopkins, without discernable results.

Likewise, the Columbus Building Trades Council contacted the AFL in Washington to protest the virtual exclusion of union labor from employment at Fort Benning due to the WPA requirement that 95 percent of workers there be drawn from the relief rolls. Incensed over its members' difficulty in securing WPA employment, the national Bricklayers Union's Daniel Collins charged that there was "a general hostility on the part of the Works Progress Administration in Georgia towards the members of [the] International Union." When WPA claimed that the Atlanta local demanded a closed shop, its president, James Moore, disputed the charge and asked only for simple fairness in work assignments that would enable union men to qualify. Moore insisted that "cheap politics" had prevailed and that "the real principle and meaning of 'relief work' [had] been forgotten."[42]

While the AFL cared for its own, other organizations raised their voices on behalf of the larger community of the unemployed. In Decatur, for example, the Georgia Women's Democratic Club criticized the content of the women's sewing project program, which allegedly left women unskilled and unemployable upon completion of the course. Club president Estelle Stevenson wrote Roosevelt "with the interest of the men and women and children of [the] country at heart" to urge a more comprehensive training program that went beyond the "cruelty of keeping women sitting all day long, day after day, on simple sewing." She also attacked Georgia WPA officials for prematurely cutting trainees off the projects with inadequate preparation for the job market. She later charged that needy women in Georgia were being denied certification and work opportunity when certified. Upon close examination, her proposed program for women project workers stayed well within the accepted social order and division of labor in the segregated South. Emphasizing domestic work, child care, nursing, and simple animal husbandry, the Women's Club plan promised employment at a modest salary after completion of the program, which was designed to uphold the economic and social status quo. All but a few African Americans were to remain within the ranks of unskilled labor, which for black women typically meant domestic work. Although WPA officials, mindful of her political ties, responded courteously to Stevenson's concerns, it appears that in many instances the club's proposals were not implemented. Frustrated, Stevenson and her allies now called for the replacement of those administrators who had failed to follow their advice. Sent to evaluate the charges, Blanche Davison, regional director of the WPA Women's and Professional Division, dismissed Stevenson's criticism as part of a pattern of "continuous agitations" rooted in her experiences with the DeKalb County WPA officials. And while at least

one WPA critic dismissed her as "the prize crank," there is good evidence that Stevenson's entreaties resulted in internal investigations within the agency.[43]

From other quarters there came another complaint over the treatment of African American women on the projects. By 1937 the *Atlanta Daily World* had called attention to the assignment of black women to hard manual labor with picks and shovels. While some preferred this work to the tedium of the sewing projects, all agreed that their tasks were "men's work." Yet these laborers failed to complain due to fears that they would lose their positions. A defensive Gay Shepperson reacted to the criticism with an assertion that the press account was "misleading" and "exaggerated," given the limited work opportunities for unskilled female workers in Atlanta. With a peak project employment of eighteen thousand in January 1936, Georgia authorities argued that it was "more difficult to provide work for women," which led to WPA's decision to "group the work of unskilled women" around activities that were "traditionally women's work." Insisting that there was no real alternative for the Atlanta work crew and that half the group had actually requested the manual labor assignment, Shepperson expected no further criticism of the project.[44] Yet women's assignments remained a contentious problem for the WPA program. In February 1936, a self-styled "citizens' committee" from Valdosta in south Georgia urged that "discrimination against Negro women on work relief" be corrected. The Valdosta women charged in an anonymous letter to the NAACP that "rank discrimination of the most aggravated type" was "practiced . . . against Negro women," who were edged out of the sewing projects and into outdoor labor assignments in inclement weather under difficult conditions. A plaintive postscript reported that "if Negroes here dare to voice a protest they are intimidated with threats of arrest, of being run out of town, and of bullets through their heads." The concerned citizens warned that government "cooperation with [the] baneful plantation system" constituted "collective peonage under official sanction." Their plea cited black protests and urged the government to "save [the] situation from deplorable outside radical agitation."[45] Despite NAACP pleas to WPA and PWA, there is no record of agency action to correct the alleged abuses, though it remained established policy to insist that planters offer prevailing wages before project workers would be released for employment.

The deeper issue implied in this communication involved the intractable problem of matching labor supply with demand in cotton-producing areas of the state. As early as September 1936, the revitalized Workers Alliance of America exerted pressure on WPA labor administrator Thad

Holt to provide assurances that the Roosevelt administration's policy was "not to force WPA workers to work at substandard wages." Workers Alliance president David Lasser insisted that the projects remain open unless employment at standard wages was available in the private sector. Confirming the Alliance's concerns, Gardner Jackson of the National Committee on Rural Social Planning, asserted that throughout the South, WPA rolls were being "drastically cut so that relief workers can be forced into fields to pick cotton." He argued that the acceptance of the "palpably false" reports of labor shortages "cannot be fairly interpreted other than as a government-aided drive against [the] Southern Tenant Farmers Union and other organizers of sharecroppers, tenants, and agricultural workers." Jackson blasted local WPA officials for ignoring the government's stated policy of keeping the projects open unless prevailing wages were offered. Not long thereafter, WPA acting administrator Corrington Gill reconfirmed the agency's expectation that project workers would accept private employment, but only "when such work [was] at a standard or going-rate of wages." This restatement of WPA policy in Georgia was necessitated by widespread reports in 1937 of a WPA-induced labor shortage from Morgan, Randolph, Burke, Union, and Warren counties, as well as the Savannah and Augusta districts. Under pressure from the Georgia congressional delegation, WPA denied that there was a labor shortage as long as standard wages were offered. Shepperson dryly added that there *was* a shortage of workers "in instances where sub-standard wages are offered for employment of two and three days duration."[46]

Of greater import were the persistent reports of racial discrimination in WPA assignment and on the projects, accounts which led African American organizations of all stripes to challenge state administrators and demand redress. Typical was the protest in July 1936 of Atlanta's black painters and paperhangers union, which told Lawrence Oxley of the United States Department of Labor that its members had been "excluded" from most WPA and PWA jobs. Union officials further alleged that when they registered as skilled mechanics, they were immediately assigned to the most menial of unskilled tasks without regard to their training and work histories. Moreover, they argued, Shepperson's office had been evasive in response to protests expressed through existing channels. Similar complaints were lodged in December by the National Urban League, whose Atlanta branch had worked to promote labor organization among the city's African American workers. In this protest, the League charged Fulton County WPA officials with "flagrant instances" of racial discrimination against skilled stonemasons and painters, who were "arbitrarily assigned to common labor work," not to mention the trained

black nurses who were unable to gain certification at all. In both cases, the Urban League found Georgia authorities guilty of "gross discrimination" that called for "aggressive action" to provide African Americans with an "equitable share of WPA employment." Meanwhile, the NAACP's Walter White asserted that the Roosevelt administration had surrendered to the racist demands of Governor Talmadge and other southern officials, adopting what *Crisis* derided as the "Georgia Plan." In response to the barrage of criticism, Shepperson's office denied the charges and explained reassignments or denials in terms of limited work opportunities for skilled tradesmen and unavoidable delays due to lapsed programs.[47]

The Urban League's answer to the troubling questions raised by its analysis of the Georgia WPA and the entire social welfare system was to promote greater cooperation among agencies, as well as organization among workers. In 1937, the League took pride in its effort to do "something practical" by offering training courses for janitors and floor finishers and seeking employment for black laborers. Buried in a detailed Community Chest analysis of the Atlanta program was the League's commitment to the "encouragement of associations of workers in various fields for the consideration of their own problem, which may or may not lead to unionization." To this end, the Urban League succeeded in organizing a local workers council "to encourage cooperative consideration of common problems of workers." One important goal was to prevent unemployed African Americans "from being exploited and from being made a tool by unscrupulous groups."[48]

While urban blacks struggled against discrimination, the problems of their rural small-town brethren dwarfed their concerns. In eastern Georgia, Warren County planters stood accused of holding black laborers in peonage. In September 1937, an ACLU report blistered community leaders in Warrenton for paying wages well below the prevailing wage and enforcing this standard through mob violence and terrorism. Here a common practice was the planters' "buying the nigger" by assuming his debts and forcing him to labor at substandard wages. This approach was accompanied by white crowd action in the black community, where stores were invaded and private homes entered by a mob, intent on guaranteeing a steady and compliant local labor supply. The end result of violence and economic exploitation was that "the Negroes of Warren County were so subdued by the terrorism and brutality of the mob that they were forced into the fields to pick cotton." The ACLU called for the U.S. Justice Department to enforce the federal Antipeonage Act, but no action was forthcoming. And as late as 1940, the radical Don West charged that in Oglethorpe County, peonage was alive and well in a domain presided

over by plantation owner W. T. Cunningham in collusion with the county government "ring." According to two white tenants, "they'd rather work niggers than whites, 'cause they can kick them around. Niggers won't do nothing. They won't leave, 'cause they afraid to," and if they would try to escape, "the sheriff would get 'em! Put 'em on the chain gang if they won't work."[49] In rural Georgia, the requirements of the harvest typically superceded the letter of the law in areas remote from any semblance of federal law enforcement.

Similar charges surfaced in more populous Bibb County, where WPA workers were released wholesale to provide labor at picking time at the miserly rate of 50 cents per hundred weight, which Shepperson reported as the prevailing wage for cotton-picking stoop labor. Here, public attention focused on NAACP charges of peonage involving African American workers being forced to work in private employment lest they be jailed for vagrancy. The Atlanta branch urged WPA officials in Washington to retain workers on the projects unless a living wage of a dollar per day was offered by private employers. Chapter president Forrester B. Washington insisted that laborers must not be dropped by WPA "because some farmer wants to hire them at a ridiculously low wage" under conditions that were "virtually equivalent to peonage."[50] While some workers were released at harvest time, all were reemployed by WPA upon reapplication, but an undercover story by the *Macon Telegraph* exposed the exploitation of day laborers in Bibb County without direct criticism of the WPA program.

Alarmed by the severity of the charges, Walter White threw the weight of NAACP into the fight with a letter to WPA's David Niles, expressing his confidence that WPA "would not wish, wittingly or unwittingly, to be a party to practices which are nothing but chattel slavery." With both NAACP and the Urban League demanding an investigation, Washington WPA officials lodged inquiries with administrators of its Georgia operation. Stung by the allegation that a "cooperative arrangement or understanding" existed between the Bibb County Sheriff, local planters, and the WPA administration, WPA was now forced to respond to the charges, especially after NAACP renewed its attack in September 1937. At this time, the Federal Council of Churches added its voice to the chorus of criticism with an urgent telegram to Hopkins citing reports that Bibb and Warren county African Americans had been threatened with release from WPA unless they agreed to pick cotton at slave wages.[51]

Throughout the debate, Georgia authorities insisted that they were blameless, in view of their announced policy of insisting on prevailing wages and using the yardstick of a dollar per day as a guideline. All of

which failed to mollify critics who noted that in low-wage districts such as Bibb County, a lower standard was accepted. Dismissing the attacks as politically motivated sniping by Talmadge supporters in Bibb County, Gay Shepperson told her superiors in Washington that in Macon and Bibb counties there was no demand for WPA laborers at all and that she was no longer transferring workers to private employment at lower rates of pay. Shepperson believed that despite some initial misunderstanding of her policies, the end result of the publicity was "to direct sympathetic public attention to the problems of WPA and to offset unfavorable criticism."[52] When the controversy escalated in September and October, Georgia officials held their ground, insisting that state policies were properly aligned with federal guidelines. In response to the inquiry by the Federal Council of Churches, Shepperson maintained that in Warren County there had been "no release to workers," while in Bibb County, WPA workers "who were real farm people" were released to work at rates approaching an effective dollar per day. The state agency's investigation revealed that in accordance with the 1937 Emergency Relief Act, WPA workers were "expected to accept private employment when work suitable to their training and experience [was] offered" at the prevailing rate.[53]

In rural areas, far removed from Shepperson's Atlanta headquarters, harsher realities prevailed. Sociologist Arthur Raper was on target in observing that blacks were "virtually forced to 'voluntarily' make themselves available during peak work seasons at prevailing wages, in order to secure WPA work when their labor [was] not needed in private employment." As the Lee County Public Welfare Director told Raper, the WPA revealed much about planters who "[did] not want their Negro wage hands and croppers to get on WPA lists" because the workers were able to save enough money from WPA wages so they could survive for the summer period and refuse work on the farms. Raper noted that "being a good plantation worker when needed" was a "condition for receiving WPA work when not needed on the farm—in that a white employer [could] make a Negro applicant for WPA ineligible by reporting that the applicant refused private employment offered him."[54] It is evident that Shepperson walked a narrow line in a situation in which one person's wage labor was another's peonage.

The persistent manipulation of the rural labor force drew the attention of a frustrated Southern Tenant Farmers Union, which continued to protest late summer and fall closure of WPA projects to accommodate planters seeking an inexpensive and docile labor force. Unfortunately, by 1938, most fragile Georgia farm organizations had collapsed. While the Farmers Union and Share Croppers Union continued to struggle against

landlords in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, their efforts failed to affect Georgia farm workers and croppers, who remained beyond the reach of the major farm organizations. Past failures did not deter the Farmers Union, which, after perfecting its merger with the Share Croppers Union, established a new Southern Organizing Committee with the intention of organizing Georgia, Tennessee, and the Carolinas in the face of the "semi-feudal sharecropping system" and "relentless political dictatorship." But the hard fact was, as the Southern Tenant Farmers Union soon acknowledged, that "the old system of sharecropping" was "on its way out." STFU now asserted that as a wage-based labor system came to prevail, it was inevitable that union organization would soon become a "political movement, with a driving force of enthusiasm approaching a new religion."[55] This prediction turned out to be inapplicable to rural Georgia, where the poll tax and an often conservative welfare bureaucracy combined to reinforce traditional work practices and social relations, thus condemning farm laborers to virtual enslavement by a labor system akin to peonage.

Despite the deleterious effects of both joblessness and WPA policy, the Atlanta branch of NAACP concluded in 1936 that unemployment should not be the primary issue on the organization's agenda. At this time, wrote Forrester B. Washington, the organization's primary concern was the "epidemic of lynching that seemed to have gripped Georgia." This emphasis was consistent with the national NAACP's campaign against lynching and in favor of a federal antilynching law. Planning for a major antilynching demonstration in Atlanta, the local organization also urged that the federal government launch a major investigation of escalating police brutality, which Washington saw as the outgrowth of propaganda from a variety of "newly formed fascist organizations which [had] incorporated into their membership many police officials." The price paid by the Atlanta NAACP branch for its own activism was to be tarred with a Red brush. A case in point was the disruption of the organization's regional meeting in April 1937 by a delegation of white American Legion members, Ku Klux Klan (KKK) organizers, police officers, and "one or two red neck organizations," who hoped to "intimidate and brow beat Negroes . . . in Atlanta and break up all cooperation and interracial efforts . . . unless they acquiesce to segregation and the general established order in the South." The leader of the uninvited guests charged that NAACP was itself Red because it took money from such allegedly Communist organizations as the Garland Fund and other radical groups. One young attendee at the conference, Clarence Mitchell, later wrote Walter White to express his renewed enthusiasm for NAACP, which was, he thought, "winning

back a number of colored people who were going over to the ILD." While Mitchell admitted that the radical organizations had "real contributions to make," he concluded that it would be "most unfortunate if the NAACP had any political tinge at all." At the mass meeting, he "spoke in a fearless and manly fashion," defending NAACP from the charges of radicalism in "a very effective manner."[56]

Just as elite organizations found it necessary to refute charges of radicalism, rural organizers confronted the same obstacles. In Alabama, for example, Communist organizer Clyde Johnson faced internal political opposition as he attempted to advance the merger of Farmers Union and the Share Croppers Union. Acknowledging his sympathy for a Farmer-Labor Party, he was forced into a disingenuous denial of his Communist Party ties in order to advance the Popular Front in agriculture. In 1937 he complained that "the Red scare has been used so much by agents of Wall Street and big industrialists to split the ranks of farmers and labor that we should have learned by now its purpose. It has no place in our union." Demanding a retraction of charges against him by the FU organ, *National Union Farmer*, in which the allegation of Communist activity had been made, Johnson hoped that union members would not "use the Red Scare to prejudice other members against those who disagree with certain policies." Even as the rural Popular Front lay in shreds, the ever-hopeful Socialist Party met in a southern conference that looked toward the perfection of a farmer-labor party as a tactic, not to mention a renewed Georgia organizational campaign, especially outside Atlanta, where the Socialist Party claimed six hundred contacts and saw "good radical sentiment that [could] be tapped."[57]

Comparable optimism penetrated the revitalized labor movement as the consequences of the historic schism between the American Federation of Labor and the fledgling Congress of Industrial Organizations became clear. In Georgia, the majority of AFL unions sided with William Green and the Federation in its resistance to what George Googe derided as "minority dual unionism." Dispatched to Atlanta for the state convention of the Georgia Federation of Labor, President Green's designated representative, Francis Dillon, "did everything it was humanly possible for him to do in the situation under seething tension" to hold the organization together, but "on the pressure of the moment" found it "advisable" to prevent "fighting and disruption" by leading loyal delegates out of the meeting. His decision was predictable since Green had pre-authorized Dillon to reorganize the GFL.[58]

The fly in the ointment for the Georgia AFL was the activism of veteran Federation leader A. Steve Nance, who broke ranks with the labor

establishment to throw his support to the emerging industrial union movement. Although Nance was a printer who had risen within the ranks of the state's craft-based trade union movement, he had been moving left ever since the watershed textile strike of 1934. After encouraging the rebellious mill workers and supporting the ACW in a losing cause, he had gone on to foster cooperation with unemployed project workers during the prevailing wage confrontation of 1935, when efforts were made to unite skilled and unskilled laborers and to promote cautious cooperation between black and white project workers. Moreover, the very structure of the Georgia labor movement was shifting in 1936 and 1937, as the United Auto Workers (UAW) organized the Atlanta auto plants and the Textile Workers Organizing Committee (TWOC) led an expansion of the industrial union movement under the aegis of the breakaway Committee (later, Congress) of Industrial Organizations (CIO). A. Steve Nance chose to evolve with the changing labor movement, assuming leadership of TWOC in Georgia and the Southeast. It was Nance's refusal to abandon his CIO affiliation more than anything else that precipitated the convention's split into two separate bodies. After being reelected president of the GFL, Nance resumed control of the organization, minus the competing group led by Dillon and Googe. In this way labor's internal war began in Georgia. Googe and the state federation, who retained the support of the building trades unions and all of the Central Labor Unions in Georgia, moved quickly to suspend CIO locals and make plans for the expulsion of Nance at an early date. Hoping to avoid a court fight, Googe informed Green that he was "moving cautiously on the Georgia situation" in order to avoid giving "Nance's crowd" a "springboard for more publicity."[59]

Nance's commitment to the CIO reflected progress made in his own work with textile workers through the Textile Workers Organizing Committee, which was reorganizing for another fight in the state's (and the South's) most important industry. A major component of the CIO, claiming a potential membership of 450,000, TWOC and its national leader, Francis Gorman, represented a key element in the budding industrial union movement. Although the CIO's Lucy Randolph Mason, who was undertaking her new role as an interpreter of the union movement to southern workers, saw Georgia as a secondary priority in which organization would come later, Nance and TWOC forged ahead to build a new brand of unionism in Georgia. Indeed, at the time of the state split, Nance and his supporters made textile organizing the centerpiece of their campaign to organize the unorganized. Nance's state board wrote Green to insist that there was no "disloyalty" in its plans to bring textile workers into the union family "under the banner of the TWOC," especially

since there were "no other unions of these workers to join." As southern regional director of TWOC, Nance refused to abandon those workers never reached by the building trades and skilled union federations. It was this determination that brought favorable reviews from Communist Party operatives and the Party's labor organ, *Labor Unity*.[60]

Communist enthusiasm for Nance and the CIO reflected the Communist Party's quiet but persistent work since 1936 to rekindle the organizational spirit in the wake of the national textile strike, as well as the party's full-throated endorsement of industrial unionism. Its embrace of Nance and TWOC were fully consistent with the Communist effort to advance the Popular Front in the South as well as the party commitment to building a more militant labor movement in the struggle against fascism, foreign and domestic. The most important AFL leader close to the Communist Party at the time of the split, Francis Gorman of the Textile Workers, had won party praise as a result of his early support for a farmer-labor party in 1936. By late 1936 an active Communist Party fraction within the UTW (now affiliated with CIO), which included representation from southern locals, was busy laying plans for cooperation with CIO leaders to revitalize the union. The Party Trade Union Commission concluded that with the exception of the steel industry, the textile drive must be its top priority in the effort to build the Communist position within the CIO. It was no surprise, therefore, that in February 1937, Jack Stachel of the party's Central Committee heaped praise on Gorman for his "progressive leadership" and committed the Communist Party to an organizing effort that might well leave the UTW the largest and mort effective union in the CIO. While he recognized the need for caution, Stachel insisted that party members not conceal their presence from workers, who were to recognize that the Communist Party had "a real role to play."[61]

Despite UTW enthusiasm for its southern campaign, progress in Georgia was painfully slow. In March 1937, International Representative Albert Cox of Atlanta reported to Gorman that there were multiple problems in the state, where the locals established were limited to Columbus and Dalton. He saw La Grange and Columbus as the extremes of difficulty, with La Grange workers "at the mercy of the Calloways, owners of the mill," and the Columbus unionists "at the mercy of the workers' ignorance." Meanwhile, Dalton was out on strike, with the outcome uncertain at best. In view of limited membership growth, Cox emphasized the need for a high profile south-wide drive with mass meetings and prominent national leadership, which, he argued, would aid the Georgia effort immensely. Despite the "chance of failure for various reasons throughout Georgia," he was convinced that "the workers here are in a mood for

the CIO to organize them." By the end of the year, TWOC cited "most encouraging" progress in the South, where Nance reported that a hundred thousand workers had joined the organizing in the Carolinas alone. Yet in Georgia, TWOC could only boast of "a full educational campaign for all locals . . . developed with the cooperation of the National Youth Administration."[62]

Closely related to the TWOC educational campaign was the international organization's encouragement of unemployment education on the part of local unions. Noting that several TWOC locals had established committees to assist members in securing relief and work from federal and local authorities, the CIO launched its own program for service to the jobless. Following the example set by several industrial unions, including the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (UE) and the United Auto Workers (UAW), TWOC took the first halting steps in late 1937 toward union involvement in unemployed organizing. For TWOC, this new emphasis on the plight of the jobless meant counseling of unionists on the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Law as well as assistance in confronting the welfare bureaucracy. In sharp contrast to the hands-off approach of AFL unions toward the jobless, TWOC maintained that under the stress of the Depression, unionists were obligated to "show the same brotherhood which bound [them] together in [their] struggle to secure better conditions and independence through union organization." CIO concern for the unemployed was also rooted in the conviction that union aid to the jobless was likely to decrease the threat of the reserve army of unemployed during work stoppages. Local unemployment committees could not only provide immediate assistance to jobless union members but could also "interest potential members in the union."[63] The effort to build solidarity between employed and unemployed workers was a clear expression of the CIO concept of the union as an extended social family.

Because of TWOC's weakness in Georgia, the brunt of responsibility for aiding the unemployed devolved upon radical groups and ad hoc workers' organizations driven by men and women in desperate circumstances. At the forefront of these efforts was an opportunistic Communist Party, which now attempted to address the problem of joblessness. In October 1936, for example, *Southern Worker* incorporated an appeal to the unemployed into its election propaganda with a bold assertion that it was the "obligation of the American government to establish an adequate system of social insurance for the unemployed, the aged, the disabled and the sick, as provided in the Frazier-Lundeen Bill." Calling for adequate relief standards, the extension of WPA, and work relief at union wages, the Communist Party organ argued that the worker was "unemployed

through no fault of his own" and therefore "must be cared for in decency and comfort."[64]

While a vote for Earl Browder was not likely to produce much relief from the scourge of unemployment, the Communist Party and its mass organizations were occasionally able to meet the needs of workers without advocates. A case in point was the unanticipated intervention of the exiled Benjamin Davis, now residing in New York, where he edited the Communist Party organ, the *Negro Liberator*. In late 1937, Davis wrote Roosevelt to protest the dismissal of eight Atlanta WPA workers who had lost their jobs due to a refusal of a local landlord renting property to the government to permit African Americans to hold jobs at the level above janitor or scrubwomen. Davis argued that this reasoning was both "inconsistent with the genius of American democracy" and "violative of the President's sense of humanity." He denounced the reported decision as open racial discrimination, insisting that no federal or state official had the "right to deprive the Negro of work or bread, because of his race or color." In this instance, the affected workers were restored to the WPA payroll as a result of Davis's persistence in demanding that justice be done. In a separate incident, Communist worker Nannie Leah Washburn recalled, it was the party-influenced Workers Alliance that reversed the WPA decision to fire her for proselytizing on the job. Washburn remembered that upon her triumphant return to the sewing project, "they like to fell over [*sic*]."[65]

On another front, the Communist Party led the continuing fight against Georgia's antiquated insurrection law. In June 1936, when another band of workers was incarcerated after Atlanta police raided a Communist meeting in a private home, the Communist Party joined the mainstream labor movement in denouncing the arrests and demanding their release. While a "wild stampede" occurred during the raid, the Atlanta Police succeeded in arresting eighteen attendees, who were arraigned as insurrectionists and held on charges of disorderly conduct. Citing an AFL resolution opposing the insurrection statute, the *Southern Worker* argued that if the detainees were found guilty, "then no local union, no liberal or working class organization [was] safe in the South." Reflecting the united front philosophy then in vogue, the *Worker* thundered: "Today the attack is on the Communists. Tomorrow it will be on all trade unionists and liberals—and tomorrow it will be in other states besides Georgia." Noting that the law was intended to "crack down on those workers who organize against starvation wages," the party organ observed that labor was "cheap" in the South precisely "because of such things as the Georgia insurrection law." The Communist argument found a receptive audience

in the Atlanta black community, among NAACP leaders, and with local clergy, thus confirming the reality of a threat to civil liberties that superceded concerns about the threat of radicalism. While the insurrection charges were ultimately dismissed, the defendants were convicted of disorderly conduct, having participated in a mixed-race meeting behind closed doors. The entire incident demonstrated the success of the Communist Party in building bridges to liberal organizations when common interests were threatened, not to mention the prominent role of the party in defense of worker rights under pressure. As a consequence, District 17 district organizer Rob Hall was able to argue in 1937 that the Communist Party in the South was regarded with "increasing legality."[66]

One of the key elements in worker tolerance for the Communist Party may be found in the party's consistent stand on behalf of relief recipients and jobless laborers. During the debate over the June arrests, for example, the NAACP had also criticized persistent discrimination against African Americans on Atlanta's WPA projects. The plight of black workers on the projects was, in fact, one of the important reasons for the Communists' substantial and enduring presence on the Atlanta labor scene throughout the 1930s. This activist impulse was again to take on organizational form by the end of 1937 with the revival of the Workers Alliance of America, a change that was largely attributed to the initiative of Communist activists, though Socialists and other labor groups were also involved in the Alliance's reactivation. While the rejuvenated Alliance failed to attract large numbers of white workers, it would become a prominent force within the black community because of its steadfast defense of African American rights in the battle for public assistance.[67] The story of the Atlanta Alliance as a militant pressure organization was only beginning as the New Year opened.

In the absence of a strong unemployed organization in Atlanta, proponents of extensive work relief floundered in their efforts to meet the needs of the jobless. Because of a relatively static labor force in Georgia, WPA projects increasingly became the domain of less skilled workers over the age of forty-five and women without extensive labor market skills. Faced by an increasingly stable demand for work relief in Georgia, congressional cost-cutters took aim at WPA in the spring of 1937. While Atlanta's congressman, Robert Ramspeck, representing a large unemployed constituency, was decidedly lukewarm on WPA cutbacks, other Georgia legislators were enthusiastic in their support for sharp curtailment of the federal relief effort. At the heart of their opposition to the Roosevelt administration's proposed relief appropriation for the coming year was the old allegation that the WPA program created a rural labor problem.

Most congressmen denied that a relief problem existed in Georgia, while Senators Richard B. Russell and Walter F. George called for reductions in the administration's budget request.[68] The leader of the cost-cutting pack was Dalton's Malcomb C. Tarver, who represented a district in which unemployed organizations had been especially militant. Attacking Tarver as "the budget balancer," the Workers Alliance denounced Georgia's miserly local relief provision of five dollars a month per family, noting that disaster awaited if another eighteen thousand were "thrown off WPA" due to the congressman's draconian proposal. The Alliance then proposed a series of remedies, including uniform budgets for all communities, full community support for WPA employment, additional Social Security benefits, and support for labor organization. The organization went on to instruct its members to become local activists for further relief benefits and to mount local marches and demonstrations against the proposed cutbacks. To dramatize the crisis, WAA announced plans for a major unemployed demonstration in Washington in late August. Meanwhile, the Alliance's national board demanded a government report on the problems cited by tenant farmers and resolved to collaborate with existing farm organizations in attacking the problem of rural unemployment.[69]

With the Workers Alliance scorching the Georgia congressional delegation, especially its nemesis, Malcomb Tarver, other organizations in Atlanta joined the fray. Most active at this time was the Urban League, which complained bitterly about the WPA layoff procedure. Rejecting Shepperson's claim that post-layoff recertification would lead to reassignment for the needy, Reginald Johnson asserted that "such layoff procedure" was a "deadening influence as far as the possibilities of Negroes being recertified because of the disposition to make such recertification difficult for them." Johnson urged the national league to protest against the layoff procedure in use. His deepest concerns were evident in another complaint highlighting discrimination against skilled African Americans, this time to Alfred Edgar Smith, the black ombudsman in WPA's Washington office. At the same approximate moment, WPA garment workers organized themselves to lobby for reinstatement of women project workers who had been unceremoniously dropped from the rolls as an economy measure. The militant women asked Roosevelt and the Georgia congressional delegation to "come to [their] rescue and demand that the WPA deal fairly and justly with each person employed on WPA."[70]

As of January 1937, unemployed organizing in Atlanta remained the province of either middle-class organizations or ad hoc jobless groups struggling to become a force on their own behalf. However, in one section

of the state, the north Georgia WPA district, the Workers Alliance had made substantial inroads. Jobless Georgians in Dalton, Chickamauga, and Rossville operated within the orbit of the Chattanooga labor community, which instilled in them substantial self-confidence and consciousness of entitlement to work relief benefits. So it was that as of June 1937, the Workers Alliance of America counted among its ranks 289 dues-paying members in the district, enough to make them a force on the labor scene and to increase Congressman Tarver's anxiety over government employment programs. There was also an established history of union organizing on the projects in the Rossville-Dalton area, which were influenced by developments in the Chattanooga metropolitan area. As early as July 1936, the well-established Hod Carriers International had organized the Rossville-Chickamauga WPA workers and engaged project managers in sharp debate over wage rates in the area. As the AFL's primary International union responsible for organization of stoop laborers and construction workers, the Hod Carriers had become a fixture in major urban areas such as Chattanooga, Birmingham, and Atlanta, where they had made some efforts to organize unemployed workers, most successfully in the Chattanooga area and Birmingham. The heart of the Rossville dispute lay in the lower wage rate paid in Chickamauga, though some workers there resided in Rossville and incurred the same expenses as other workers in that community, which was close to Chattanooga. The Hod Carriers charged that the WPA had moved Rossville workers to Chickamauga to break a wage rate strike then underway. Ironically, nonunion project workers protested that the Hod Carriers did not represent their interests and that it was they who were being discriminated against and subjected to unwarranted layoffs. Further review of the case by WPA officials in Washington revealed that no projects had been undertaken in Rossville and La Fayette due to lack of local sponsorship, which had forced worker assignments to the Chickamauga project. After extended discussion, the issue was resolved when striking workers agreed to return to the project while most Rossville workers found work with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). It was at this point that the nonunion petitioners wrote Harry Hopkins to complain that the Hod Carriers had "used their influence to oust the members of the WPA who would not join the union."[71] The entire controversy was reminiscent of the internal debate among strikers during the general textile strike of 1934. Once again, it seems clear that one of the greatest weaknesses of any effort to organize working-class Georgians lay in the inability of workers to arrive at consensus concerning their needs, even in the face of an economic crisis of massive proportions.

Not to be outdone, the Workers Alliance now moved to embrace the Chickamauga strikers. Frank M. Lynch of Chattanooga, state chairman of the Tennessee Workers Alliance, wrote the Alliance's Washington office to protest against the strikebreaking at the local project. Lynch argued that the previous week's agreement to restore all Chickamauga workers to their jobs and start a Rossville project, including union members, was being used as a ploy to stall and perpetuate "scabbing the job at Chickamauga." The key issue involved a substantial number of Rossville relief workers who, though certified, had not gained employment on WPA. The following year, the Workers Alliance charged that widespread "irregularities" persisted on Walker County roadwork, while keeping up the pressure to maintain prevailing wages on the Chickamauga project. Repeating an established pattern of evasive tactics, Shepperson's office denied that any violations could be found and insisted that local prevailing wages were being paid on the projects in question.[72] The problem of prevailing wages in the north Georgia areas adjacent to Chattanooga was not resolved and was to remain a thorn in the side of WPA authorities until major changes came when organizational pressures increased in 1938.

For the short run, however, jobless workers, vulnerable farmers, and nonunion laborers struggled to survive in the face of Depression conditions. Yet progress had been made on the road to an organized future and a working-class antifascist alliance. Most prominently, the effort to create a Popular Front had made significant strides as the AFL, CIO, SCU, and WAA worked to establish the foundation for a united front on behalf of as yet unorganized workers and the unemployed. The sporadic organizational efforts of middle-class groups like the Urban League and NAACP, as well as the rising activism of grassroots worker organizations such as the Workers Alliance, Communist Party, Socialist Party, and the various ad hoc groups that came together in self-defense, had raised consciousness of the work relief system's inadequacies and brought some results for their clients. Despite the halting progress, a budding unemployed movement remained in its infancy, as the jobless looked anxiously to the future. One thing is clear: Georgia workers and unemployed citizens were searching for a vehicle to adequately express their protests against a system of social provision that failed to meet minimum standards and kept thousands of jobless Georgians enmeshed in a social system that had outlived its usefulness. At this point, the Workers Alliance of America, which had emerged on the national scene as champion of the unemployed, prepared to launch a new campaign to elevate the standards maintained by destitute southern workers. As the Roosevelt Recession of 1937–38 set in,

Georgia workers looked for help from new friends and emerging organizational entities. The future was uncertain, complicated as it was by traditional patterns of race relations, long-held assumptions concerning government welfare systems, and established workplace traditions that died hard; but the jobless were soon to display a new openness to appeals that had once seemed irrelevant but now offered hope.

The Workers Alliance and a United Front

Jobless Workers Organize, 1937–1938

Against the background of previous worker efforts to connect through organization with the burgeoning New Deal bureaucracy, unemployed Georgians prepared for action as a new year opened. In response to new challenges as the Roosevelt administration adjusted the boundaries of its work relief program, a revitalized Popular Front emerged to make further claims on the government on behalf of workers displaced by first the early Depression and finally the more limited short recession of 1937–38. In the process, the Communist Party emerged as the key driving force in the creation of a viable unemployed movement, primarily through the leadership it provided in the Workers Alliance of Georgia. Labor unions, Communists, Socialists, and middle-class elite organizations vied for leadership of this cresting movement, but it was clearly the Communist Party and the Workers Alliance that surfaced as the most active organizations speaking for the jobless and working on their behalf. By 1938, the Alliance had become a powerful body, the living embodiment of the Popular Front and the unquestioned voice of Georgia's jobless workers and dependent families, especially the disproportionately large number of African Americans who made up the army of the state's unemployed. Whether in Atlanta, Columbus, Rossville, Savannah, or elsewhere, this organization gained in stature as it became more effective in meeting the needs of the unemployed. Successful though it became, the Alliance contained within the composition of its leadership the seeds of its own destruction and the eventual collapse of the Popular Front under intense

political pressure. The rise and fall of the Workers Alliance provides the critical subtext in the story of the effort to build a class movement in Depression Georgia and to craft a collective movement among workers long assumed impervious to the virus of labor organization and group consciousness. Careful examination of this period in the history of the unemployed movement contradicts the argument that Georgia workers were incapable of organizing in self-interest. On the contrary, the organized unemployed and jobless workers shared a collective vision and acted on that perception.

The year 1937 witnessed ongoing tension among planters, employers, bureaucrats, and unemployed workers desperate for solutions to the problems encountered in the daily struggle for existence. Predictably, organized labor maintained pressure on WPA officials for the maintenance of wage standards as well as equal opportunity for union members on the projects, where skilled labor wages were being undermined by the new security wage. In January 1937, for example, the Atlanta Building Trades Council insisted that antiunion employers had conspired with WPA authorities to eliminate union representatives in supervisory capacities on the projects, which resulted in the gradual removal of union members from government employment programs. Council president Dick Hudson complained to AFL Building Trades officials in Washington that "common labor" was being used to "break down our standards."[1] His protest reached Harry Hopkins through the intercession of AFL Building Trades president J. R. Williams, whose pleas fell upon deaf ears in an agency firmly committed to the principle of the security wage on WPA projects. Never a group to remain silent, the Atlanta bricklayers local followed up in August with a comparable plea emphasizing alleged WPA discrimination against skilled workers in the form of preference given mechanics without training or union affiliation. Local president J. R. Moore alerted WPA's David K. Niles to the agency's error in hiring workers with little or no experience or skills, as well as the union's longstanding opposition to the hated security wage. Moore charged that "a lot of cheap politics" had meant that "the real meaning of 'relief work' [had] been forgotten."[2]

While the labor establishment circled the wagons in support of the union wage, the Atlanta Urban League complemented their plea with an appeal for the dignity of unemployed African American white-collar and semiskilled workers. Simultaneously, the League worked to upgrade the skills of unskilled black workers with a series of employment programs aimed at preparation for unionization. When confronted by federal employment requirements mandating union membership, the League responded

with classes that might lead to both "efficiency on the job" and aid to workers meeting qualifications that might "open up new opportunities of livelihood."[3] In contrast, the NAACP was moving away from the issue of unemployment in favor of a more militant stance against police brutality, which, due to the growth of multiple proto-fascist organizations like the KKK, Black Shirts, and Men of Justice, had become a more urgent concern due to allegations of police membership in the rogue groups. Atlanta NAACP president Forrester B. Washington, who had previously denounced the "epidemic of lynching that seems to have gripped Georgia," now insisted that local police and officialdom were in part responsible for the new reign of terror. The most prominent expression of the new urgency was NAACP's outspoken support of national antilynching legislation, which exposed the organization to baseless charges of Communism and resulted in renewed efforts to "brow beat Negroes . . . in Atlanta and break up all co-operation and interracial efforts . . . unless they acquiesce to segregation and the general established order in the South." In this instance, NAACP was successful in converting the leader of a racist, Red-baiting crowd of Legionnaires that had invaded the association's Atlanta meeting to endorse the Gavaghan Anti-Lynching Bill. When the American Legion critic rose during a public forum to ask whether NAACP was a radical organization supported by Communists," young Clarence Mitchell answered with a detailed explication of NAACP goals and principles, while black lawyer A. T. Walden angrily asserted that the organization was open to all people regardless of race and that "no doubt contributions had been received from Democrats, Republicans, Communists, white people, Jews, Negroes and many other sources in the fight for justice." After Walden received a "big cheer," the interloper seemed "a little disappointed" and insisted that he had not "come to raise confusion." Forrester B. Washington later informed Walter White that the critic had done a "right-about-face" and was now "sold" on the NAACP in a conversion White thought important in view of the recent epidemic of Red-baiting sponsored by the local American Legion, KKK, and other white supremacy organizations. The same meeting approved a strong protest to the American Legion criticizing the Atlanta Legionnaires' effort to disrupt the gathering.[4]

The unfounded charges of NAACP sympathy for Communism were a reflection of the Communist Party's stubborn effort to win the support of Atlanta's disillusioned African Americans, some of whom had openly expressed sympathy for a radical approach to the failures of the capitalist system they confronted on a daily basis. Communist Party prestige had grown as a result of the ILD role in the Herndon defense as well as the

party's efforts to aid the unemployed, which during the 1936 presidential campaign had taken the form of a direct appeal to the jobless emphasizing the argument that unemployment resulted not from any personal failure but rather the collapse of the entire socioeconomic system. The Communist Party maintained that in view of the severe economic crisis, government must "care for" workers and their dependents "in decency and comfort," an argument that was difficult to refute. Although the black elite consistently warned against Communist oversimplification and expressed confidence in "the powers inherent in democracy to cure its own ills," NAACP had realistically assessed the power of the radical appeal. Consequently, progress on the Gavaghan Bill to control lynching led Atlanta activist Clarence Mitchell to conclude that the NAACP was "winning back a number of colored people who were going over to such organizations as the ILD." Himself a Socialist, Mitchell told Walter White that while "the radical organizations have real contributions to make," it would be a serious error for NAACP to acquire a "political tinge." On the contrary, he was convinced that the organization's steadfast commitment to court action and legislative work had led to a "new heart in the fight for civil rights" within the black masses.[5]

Despite the revival of urban militancy, some of the greatest miscarriages of social justice were occurring in outlying areas, where radicalism faced a formidable challenge. From rural locations in Bibb and Union counties came more of the familiar planter complaints of an inadequate labor supply due to the work opportunity provided by WPA. One press report quoted Union County planter H. H. Akins, who complained that he had to "do practically all my work myself since this relief came in" and insisted that he could not "hire anyone for love or money." Likewise, one southern Georgia turpentine producer cited similar labor shortages, indicating that he was "working white men" in his forests for the "first time in years."[6]

By September 1937, the controversy over the impact of WPA project employment and the vestiges of economic enslavement had reached fever pitch when reports of outright peonage in Bibb and Warren counties drew the attention of national social action organizations, including NAACP and the Federal Council of Churches. Atlanta NAACP president Forrester B. Washington charged that Bibb County WPA officials, the county sheriff, and local planters had hatched a conspiracy to create "a system which was nothing but peonage." In response, Walter White took the lead in forcing the issue of discrimination against black farm laborers with WPA authorities in Washington. White told Harry Hopkins that there existed a concerted effort to force African Americans off WPA projects and relief

rolls in order to provide cotton planters with low-wage labor. To resolve the problem, White asked for a federal investigation of WPA activities affecting black labor in all cotton-raising states, with emphasis on allegations of forced removal from the projects. He also asked Hopkins to warn all WPA administrators to guard against any efforts to introduce peonage, as had been alleged so many times in Georgia. Finally, he urged that any findings revealing forced labor at substandard wages be communicated directly to the attorney general so that prosecution of violators of the peonage laws might proceed. An aroused NAACP demanded that the Justice Department take action against the planters of Warren County, whose practices had been the subject of recurring complaints. At the same approximate moment the Federal Council of Churches cited Bibb and Warren counties as current violators of the federal peonage statutes and echoed the NAACP demand for an investigation.[7]

In response to the NAACP's urgent demands, WPA's African American ombudsman in Washington, Alfred E. Smith, wrote White to confirm that the problem had been placed before WPA authorities in the strongest possible way. As a consequence, the agency's Aubrey Williams instructed Smith to "keep the closest possible watch on this situation," which he agreed to do in view of his "natural interest" in the matter as black advocate within WPA. As a result of Smith's prodding, WPA acknowledged that a serious problem existed relating to the "proper interpretation of prevailing wages for given work in a given locality." Although a series of compromises had been patched together, Smith argued, Shepperson had made it plain that in most cases (Bibb County seems to have been a glaring exception), workers were free to remain on WPA unless a wage exceeding a dollar per hour was offered. WPA administrator David K. Niles nonetheless assured the NAACP that "whenever discrimination [had been] found an adjustment [had been] made." Smith closed with the observation that "the problems of work relief were the problems of labor and economics in general," which had led him to make numerous recommendations, many of them considered by the administration to be "a little too strong to adopt in full."[8]

If WPA failed to act, it was not due to an absence of pressure from the key advocacy organizations. In June 1937, Shepperson and Niles were subjected to a barrage of complaints about Bibb County from the Urban League and NAACP, both of them unconvinced by government denials of collusion with planters and businessmen to force laborers off the WPA rolls by all means, including the threat of imprisonment.[9] For her part, Shepperson deftly deflected the blows, which she regarded as the result of misinformation, as well as meddling by Talmadge supporters in Bibb

County and elsewhere. Although it was true, she admitted, that there was some periodic curtailment of WPA projects, especially due to seasonal demands for farm labor, state administrators never deviated from their guiding principle that prevailing wages must be offered before workers could be released for private employment. In one testy response to an inquiry from Washington, Shepperson promised that if "anything more [came] up" relating to this issue, she was prepared to wire local commissioners and public officials with a threat to close the projects in Bibb County. She told her superiors that the local authorities were "trembling because they are afraid I am going to do it."[10]

Despite the vigorous denials from Georgia WPA officials, it is a fact that by the fall of 1937 employment on the projects had fallen well below the state's job quota. As a result, Shepperson inaugurated a reorganization involving the consolidation of the state's WPA districts as well as a new emphasis on white-collar and technical employment on the projects. There were no plans for increasing Georgia quotas for the coming winter, at least until the impact of the Roosevelt recession of 1937–38 became clear. By late 1937 both urban and rural workers reeled under the impact of collapsing cotton prices and scheduled cutbacks in New Deal work programs. By October 1937 only 20,156 persons were employed on WPA projects in Georgia, down from a high of 56,161 in February 1936. As a result of the burgeoning job crisis, relief rolls had expanded dramatically by 1938, a development that caught WPA officials off guard and placed a new burden on the underfunded projects.[11]

Another social development that may be linked to the unanticipated economic downturn of late 1937 was increased militancy among Georgia workers. Inspired by the rise of the CIO and the new nationwide activism among industrial laborers, many state workers again demonstrated the spirit of rebellion that had spawned the great textile strike of 1934. The most significant outcome for the South was the formation of the Textile Workers Organizing Committee (TWOC), which committed itself to the organization of the South's nonunion textile workers. TWOC's Deep South Office, headed by the now impeached AFL expatriate Steve Nance, endorsed the CIO's broad democratic agenda. While some of Georgia's AFL unions remained suspicious of WPA due to what they saw as the corrosive effect of the security wage on the prevailing wage, other locals promoted greater access to federal employment programs, especially for the skilled workers who still made up the bulk of organized labor in the state. Moreover, the appearance in 1937 of TWOC and other CIO industrial unions, many already committed to a national policy of union service to

the jobless, spawned a new interest in the problems of unemployed workers on the part of organized labor.

One ramification of revived labor unionism was WPA's renewed interest in the concept of workers' education. Due to the memory of Tom Tippett and the radicalizing character of the original program in 1934, agency officials moved slowly in 1938 to reconstitute the program on more limited lines. WPA officials recalled that "previous attempts at Workers' Education had been unfortunate because of unwise leadership, unfavorable publicity, or lack of time and means on the part of volunteer teachers." As a result, "certain organizations were prejudiced against the movement, which for them had radical associations." The revived program emphasized "the training of the worker in developing a critical attitude through the use of democratic processes," with subject matter considered "secondary to the method of approach." Similarly, the "Foremanship" course stressed the training of WPA job supervisors and foremen in techniques for the promotion of "effective cooperation," the prevention of "labor disturbances," and dealing with "chronically dissatisfied workers." While the federal Workers Education program was weakening on a national scale, teacher training supervisor Ernestine Friedmann of the Southern School for Workers regarded Georgia's project as a pocket of renewed activity, where auto and textile workers came together to study labor regulations, negotiating procedures, and labor history. She reported that the WPA state supervisor was "very conscious of this as an experiment for the whole South." The new Workers Education program, which at first employed only one black teacher, was carried out through community organizations in which controversial issues were less likely to be addressed. For example, textile union leader Homer Pike, who had been locked out after the strike of 1934, found a natural home in the Workers Education Program, but he was told on no uncertain terms that he "wasn't to do any organizin' or anything like that." Pike recalled that it was acceptable to answer questions about unions, but that he "wasn't supposed to encourage 'em or discourage 'em about the unions." Before long, he "figured it out that what she meant was that if the workers were gonna organize they were gonna organize and there was nothin' we could do about it except to try to educate them so they wouldn't run wild once they got some power." Both AFL and TWOC were drawn into the planning for the program, which offered workers' education courses to Atlanta's unemployed workers until 1940, when the Georgia program was allowed to expire. CIO and AFL representatives told Friedmann that a labor forum sponsored by Workers Education had made an important

contribution by "bringing them together on neutral ground." While the program that unfolded in 1938 was less challenging than the original version, it nonetheless engaged the unemployed as well as employed unionists in meaningful explorations of labor history and inservice training. Over the life of the program, nearly two thousand students were enrolled from the Workers Alliance, CIO unions, AFL unions, WPA projects, settlement houses, prisons, churches, and agricultural projects. While programs were centered in Atlanta, Dalton, Augusta, and Columbus, classes were offered statewide. Pike thought that, like schools and universities, the workers educational programs were "run with the idea of maintaining the capitalistic system," which he personally found acceptable only if the system would "be maintained with a more equitable distribution of wealth." In the final analysis, then, state director Carolyn Dillard was no Tom Tippett, nor was there much common ground in the programs they ran, a distinction that was clearly a matter of design on the part of WPA bureaucrats.[12]

The active involvement of TWOC in planning for the workers' education program demonstrated that the momentous changes then transforming the labor movement were to have an impact, even in nonunion Georgia and among the unorganized jobless. Sent South by the National Youth Administration (NYA) on a fact-finding tour, the STFU's H. L. Mitchell located part of labor's problem in its lack of success in mobilizing the rural as well as the urban worker. Mitchell noted that in Georgia, as in other parts of the South, the key to class uplift lay in the organization of tenant farmers who were "without organization" but "not without hope." He argued that "given an organization to speak directly for them" and the emergence of leadership that would reach out to textile workers, "this class of worker could soon become the dominant political power in the South." Mitchell recalled that the development of this type of farmer-labor movement was the "objective of the late Steve Nance, who was one of the most farsighted labor leaders the South has ever produced." Nance, a mainstream labor leader whose ideas had evolved in a progressive direction since the early New Deal, had always seen "this combination of farmers and workers as the hope of the South." For his part, the STFU leader urged the CIO to "realize the need for organization among the tenant farmers on a southwide basis." Insisting that it was "time that labor itself took a hand in the affairs of the South," Mitchell asserted that his organization, situated between the southern agrarians on the right and the Communists on the left, was the ideal tool to accomplish this goal. STFU proposed to "organize practically everything remotely connected with agriculture" but insisted that it must "do a job of educating

the unions as to the importance of organizing the southern workers in agriculture."[13]

One technique for bridging the gap was for STFU to embrace unemployed farm workers and their families as a means of demonstrating the organization's commitment to needy workers whatever their locale. Consequently, in late 1937, Mitchell and other STFU leaders pressured WPA officials in Washington to provide adequate employment or relief provisions for southern rural workers. The union followed up with a concentrated campaign with Arkansas members to document planter resistance to WPA certification as well as the reality of dire need. In addition, STFU attempted to demonstrate that there was "quite a discrepancy between the amounts being paid to Negro and white applicants."[14] Yet because his organization was absent from the deep Southeast, its direct influence in Georgia was negligible.

More significant for the state's workers were the efforts of Georgia labor unions, some of which responded to the employment crisis of 1937–38 by working to secure increased government assistance for jobless workers. While the state AFL was long on words and short on actions, it did adopt a resolution at its 1938 convention notifying Georgia senators and congressmen that the organization favored work relief programs so long as they were confined to projects that did not "drive [its] members to the relief rolls or break down standards of competent mechanics and unskilled laborers." Meanwhile, TWOC responded to job cutbacks with an effort to "assure adequate relief to all workers in the Southern states." The new organization was especially attentive to the relief needs of its members, but made it clear that "adequate relief" was the right of all "victims of industry."[15]

Behind the TWOC rhetoric was a novel development in the social unionism professed by the young CIO. As early as 1937, the United Auto Workers had responded to the layoffs of that year with its own program of unemployed organizing among its jobless members and other relief recipients. In May 1937, Walter Reuther's Westside Local 174 in Detroit had created a welfare committee as its major tool for meeting the relief needs of the membership by acting as ombudsman for jobless autoworkers. By the end of the year, all UAW locals had established similar welfare committees to aid their unemployed members. In 1938, these committees evolved into a UAW Welfare Department that organized WPA project workers within their jurisdictions, an idea soon adopted by all CIO International Unions under the leadership of John L. Lewis, who saw the CIO's WPA Auxiliaries as a vehicle for organizing the unorganized and developing union consciousness among workers. The UAW defended its

work with the unemployed as an effort to prevent its members from being "de-unionized" by the recession. It also saw unemployed organizing as a means of grooming unionists in its new WPA organization, which would result in the return of union-conscious workers to their jobs following the economic downturn. Moreover, worker morale could be maintained at a high level because jobless auto workers on WPA would know that they had not been forgotten by the union in their moment of personal crisis. The result would be solidarity among employed and unemployed workers who would resist efforts to use them as scab labor. Not only would the union's unemployed organization be a teaching tool in the school of unionism, but it would underscore the union's function as a social family.

A clear indication of the UAW's success was the CIO decision to adopt the autoworkers' model when it created its own national unemployed organization, the CIO Unemployment Committee, which was to work within its other international unions to serve jobless members. Not only did the international unions serve as ombudsmen for jobless workers and their families in dealing with both the welfare bureaucracy and the WPA authorities, but the CIO became a powerful national advocate for the unemployed on the political front, both locally and in Washington, D.C. Once John L. Lewis embraced the idea of union unemployed organizing, CIO appointed Ralph Hetzel its national unemployment director, charged with responsibility for urging local industrial union councils to establish their own unemployment subcommittees. As a result, the program helped maintain union membership and, in some locations, became the "dominant activity of the union." In this way, many CIO unions were often able to maintain their membership and ride out the recession. The bonus was the loyalty of unemployed unionists who remained firmly committed to their home unions in the future.[16]

The Georgia adaptation of the UAW-CIO initiative took the form of an independent union of unemployed workers, which formed in December of 1937 at the same approximate moment that jobless Michigan autoworkers were engaged in the establishment of a UAW unemployed auxiliary. In Atlanta a group of unemployed auto workers joined with other area workers to create the Unemployed and WPA Workers Union. Assisted by UAW attorney Joe Jacobs and organizer May Bagwell of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the group was led by President Harvey J. Pike and Vice-President Hardy Scott, who was at the time Georgia's leading Communist activist. The membership quickly grew to approximately one thousand, thus creating an organization that commanded the attention of Atlanta WPA officials. Described by one FBI informant as "very success-

ful in its operations," the union's purpose was to "aid the unemployed in securing relief on WPA jobs and to assist WPA employees in presenting grievances." Jacobs, who also worked in collaboration with the Workers Alliance, a separate body, later recalled that although the Alliance "never had any money," it was the best place to go "if you wanted help in getting food or getting help from some agency." This organization maintained a storefront in downtown Atlanta, where secondhand clothing was made available and organizational recruitment took place. The Workers Alliance, Jacobs remembered, "also did some demonstrating, too, in terms of making the public aware." Through word of mouth and leaflet distribution, the organization succeeded in exerting "enough pressure upon the local WPA officials so that these officials were forced to cooperate with the Grievance Committee of the union." To labor attorney Joe Jacobs, the Alliance was a court of last resort. He later explained that "a lot of people that [he] worked with who belonged to unions . . . got out of work. So what do you tell them to do? They can't pay dues to the union because they weren't working. So [he] said: Maybe this is one that can help you. Try it." While labor representation was perfectly consistent with national WPA policy, the Alliance's growth was alarming to the conscientious FBI watchdog because of the political backgrounds of many of the insiders. Included among officers and executive board members of the Unemployed and WPA Workers, he maintained, were thirty people, all of them perceived as "known and recognized as Communists and agitators."[17]

The observer's account, while probably exaggerated, called attention to one of the central difficulties confronted by the organized unemployed movement in Georgia; namely, the role played by dedicated radical activists in building a united front of jobless workers in the state. The presence of Communists in most unemployed organizations was traceable to the struggles of the early 1930s, when the most significant group prepared to work with the jobless was the small but dedicated Communist Party. There was, in fact, a line of continuity linking the Unemployed Councils of the Hoover era, the Workers Alliance reorganized in 1936–37, and the independent unemployed union that emerged in late 1937. It is equally clear that the key activist group in these organizations was the Communist Party, which consistently aligned itself with the dispossessed and often came to their assistance in the hour of need. Acceptance of Communist leadership by the jobless was consistent with the increasing propensity of Georgia workers to view themselves as part of a distinct working class with common class interests.

The organizational response, however, came from a variety of sources. As early as June 1937, for example, the prospect of massive WPA layoffs

had revived Atlanta unemployed activists in several quarters. On June 10, the WPA Garment Workers of Atlanta demanded that the first wave of worker layoffs be reversed and that all agency bureaucrats, including Shepperson and Hopkins, "be given a vacation without pay until such time as there may be funds to pay needy women with children the small wage of $39 a month." Angered because "many women were dropped, without notice, no reason given them," the women's union demanded that Roosevelt and the Congress "come to [their] rescue" and that WPA "deal fairly and justly with each person." At the same approximate moment the Workers Alliance's national president, David Lasser, told his annual convention that in Georgia, the home of "the budget balancer, Mr. Tarver," relief standards had sunk to five dollars a month per family. Lasser wondered aloud "what would happen there should 18,000 more families be thrown off WPA because of reduction in appropriations advocated by Mr. Tarver." Described by historian Douglas Flamming as the "undisputed champion of north Georgia's courthouse crowd," Tarver had long been the nemesis of the CIO and the area labor movement. His opposition to increased WPA funding was but one of the issues that later helped galvanize worker opposition in an attempt to remove him from office. The national Alliance called for registration centers, appeals boards to hear discrimination cases and layoff protests, local marches and job actions, and community support for additional WPA programs. WAA argued that in Georgia, the impact of the layoffs would mean that the May contingent of 29,287 WPA clients would drop to 22,671 by mid-July, a loss of 6,616 jobs. Its emergency bulletin of June 17, 1937, thus maintained that members "must act first in every city." Unfortunately, the Alliance spoke from a position of relative weakness in a state with fewer than 300 dues-paying members, most in the North Georgia WPA District.[18] It should be noted, however, that these membership figures did not include the rapidly growing Atlanta Unemployed and WPA Workers Union, which would eventually affiliate with the Alliance and swell its ranks.

Although the Workers Alliance itself was stronger in the Dalton-Rossville area, the key organization in Atlanta as of January 1938 was the newly organized WPA and Unemployed Workers Local No. 1. From its inception in December 1937 through June 1938, this independent unemployed organization was successful in drawing together DeKalb and Fulton counties' union and nonunion jobless workers in a united front organization that integrated both Communist and noncommunist members. Radical influence was clear in the catalytic role of Communist Party operative Hardy Scott in the deliberations of the aggressive Atlanta local,

which was literally the Popular Front in operation. In agitating for greater job opportunity as well as humane treatment of workers on the projects, Scott unquestionably enjoyed the support of the membership regardless of political affiliation.

In March 1938, for example, the local focused its attention on the looming threat of further cutbacks in WPA appropriations, as well as the scarcity of work opportunity for skilled manual laborers. In an appeal to AFL's William Green, the organization's 850 members urged the Federation to "use [its] best efforts to increase the grant of funds and enlargement of quotas so that these 'intermediate, skilled, and technical and professional' workers can be put on appropriate WPA jobs." A companion protest went to both Harry Hopkins and Atlanta congressman Robert Ramspeck, urging their support for the Schwellenbach-Allen resolution to repeal Virginia congressman Clifton Woodrum's amendment to limit WPA appropriations.[19] In these communications, the union noted that while Atlanta was experiencing difficulties, the problem was symptomatic of a statewide crisis.

Beyond legislative lobbying, the local's main concern was the processing of grievances and service as ombudsman for project workers. A variety of individual cases were brought to the attention of local relief officials as well as the WPA bureaucracy. In March a frustrated grievance committee addressed the union's concerns directly to President Roosevelt, whom they vainly hoped would solve their problems with local administrators. Tales of starvation, disease, inadequate relief, and arbitrary job reclassification reached the president's office, only to be referred back to WPA for perfunctory replies. Grace Darnell of Local 1 reported one case of an underfunded tubercular relief recipient "slowly starving to death," while other relief clients were told by WPA officials "how easy it is to get a job" but denied employment. At the same time, she told Roosevelt, it took "half the whole [monthly] appropriation" to "pay off the office workers, for doing next to nothing." Equally fruitless were the union's protests against inhumane treatment, by project supervisors and alleged speedups, which Scott likened to "convict, chain gang methods" employed by "anti–New Deal forces" in Georgia. He argued that WPA jobs should be national models and that the administration must not "play into the reactionaries' hands by provoking labor trouble"; in Scott's estimation, Roosevelt was on target in his contention that "the human factor is main." In an appeal to the sympathetic southerner, WPA assistant administrator Aubrey Williams, he asserted that the union could not "be just and loyal to these workers" unless it would "rebel against these labor conditions." On occasion, local appeals were successful, as WPA officials

were pressured into cooperating with the union grievance committee. A case in point was the reversal of Shepperson's decision to fire Communist Party firebrand Nannie Leah Washburn, who had insisted on campaigning against WPA cutbacks while at work. Washburn recalled that after a weekend hiatus, "the union had me back at work."[20]

By most accounts, the independent unemployed local functioned efficiently, at least as a grievance processing body, until June 1938, when its strong Communist caucus proposed a new, more comprehensive approach to the problems of the unemployed through direct affiliation with the national Workers Alliance of America. An FBI observer noted that the ubiquitous Communist Party operative Hardy Scott, who was at the center of the deliberations, persuaded the membership to join the Alliance in order to enjoy the advantages of "increased strength and influence" that resulted from a national connection. Affiliation with the Workers Alliance was also a sweeping Popular Front tactic, which brought together members of the independent unemployed groups, labor union jobless units, and both white and African American WPA locals. As a result, "everything functioned smoothly for several months after the affiliation."[21]

The unification of the Atlanta unemployed organizations coincided with the Workers Alliance's national campaign to remove the wage differential between WPA's southern region and other sections of the country. Citing Roosevelt's "excellent speech" at Gainesville, Georgia, as a potential "challenge to the Southland's sweatshops," Alliance president David Lasser urged the administration to eradicate the regional distinction and thereby "seize the opportunity to extend this raised purchasing power" to "every private industry in the South." If the government would thus exercise new leadership, Lasser argued, there would emerge a "New South," determined to "remove from their land the shame of feudalism." By ending poverty, halting lynching, and stabilizing wages, he insisted, the remnants of feudal tension could be eradicated; and he saw the organized unemployed as part of that sectional resolution.[22]

When the long-awaited wage hike came in early July, the Workers Alliance was quick to take credit for "one of the most significant victories for our organization." Promising to fight for further equalization, national secretary Herbert Benjamin proclaimed that "organization is power," and that southern workers should coalesce. He noted that southern WPA workers "did very little to help get that increase," which was won by organized workers who were not generally to be found in the South. Benjamin acknowledged that in the South, "the terror has been so great that it was far more difficult for them to join and maintain organization" than was true in other sections. Nonetheless, he suggested, the pay increase

would provide "a greater stimulus for joining and maintaining membership in their own organization—the Workers Alliance."[23]

Meanwhile, Hardy Scott reported that in Georgia the organization of the unemployed was "forging ahead" in spite of local impediments to progress. He decried interference from municipal officials who ensured that in Atlanta, "the organized jobless are not permitted to assemble or demonstrate in mass meetings," in clear violation of their civil rights. In defiance of these pressures, the June organizational meeting was counted a great success, partly due to the presence of Lasser at the gathering. Not only was Atlanta brought into the Alliance fold, but the presence of organizers from Brunswick, Augusta, and Columbus evidenced growth in outlying areas of the state. And the Columbus–Phenix City area was reportedly experiencing especially rapid expansion. Moreover, the presence of fraternal delegates from UAW, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), and the Atlanta CIO Council indicated that labor solidarity in a Popular Front was growing, at least among industrial unions. The only note of discord resulted from the Alliance's decision to bow to southern racial practices by segregating Atlanta's black and white locals; yet even the spectacle of organized African Americans was enough to unnerve guardians of the old order.[24]

While the new Atlanta Workers Alliance chapter functioned successfully as a grievance committee over the summer, it immediately turned its organizational attention to plans for a statewide conference in late August. The centerpiece demand in preparation for this meeting was a proposal for another wage increase to bring Atlanta workers' compensation more closely into line with other national metropolitan areas, as well as to implement compliance with the minimum wage established by the recently enacted wage-hours bill of 1938. On August 27 an all-South conference convened in Atlanta, with representatives from five southern states, including a strong Georgia contingent from Atlanta, Augusta, and Columbus. While the attendance figures were exaggerated, the Alliance appeared to have undergone significant statewide expansion; now the organization planned for a presence at the WAA national convention, scheduled for September in Cleveland, Ohio.[25] In Atlanta, African Americans had achieved an organizational identity rarely seen in the Depression South, where they functioned as the only exclusively black Workers Alliance local in the United States. To the casual observer, the Georgia unemployed appeared finally to have found their voice. Or so it seemed.

As of September 1938, there were, in fact, two factions struggling behind the scenes for effective control of the organization, one headed by Lawrence Duke, who reportedly had ties with the Ku Klux Klan, and the

other composed of the Communists, who followed the leadership of the irrepressible Hardy Scott. While Scott's Communist activities were well known, Duke's personal politics remained more obscure. Both the Workers Alliance and the FBI's informant maintained that Duke was a Klan member, but independent evidence is scarce. One thing is certain: the increasing influence of radicals in the Atlanta Workers Alliance, which matched political developments in the national organization, was felt in other Georgia locales as well. Communist strength among the unemployed was also present in the area bordering Alabama, including Columbus and even in the WPA's resettlement project, the Pine Mountain experimental community. At Pine Mountain Valley, one Federal Writers Project researcher observed, the proximity of Communist Party District 17 southern headquarters in Birmingham meant that party organizers came in at night to proselytize, an intrusion regarded as dangerous by the community administrator. Expressing a contrary view, one Pine Mountain resident insisted that "every time something happens, they start blaming it on the Reds." He noted that the root problem was a worker petition for higher wages, which was attributed to the infiltration of Communists (allegedly two dozen families), who were immediately asked to leave the community. At the same approximate moment, the FBI's key informant concluded, probably correctly, that the Communist faction held the upper hand in the Atlanta Alliance chapter. One expression of their influence was the Alliance's control of a workers' education program offered at the organization's Atlanta headquarters, where the labor studies program allegedly contained a strong dose of Communist content. Workers Alliance activity in the education program reflected national Workers Education director Hilda Smith's belief that because WPA confronted an "active branch" of the organization on a daily basis, it made sense to promote courses in labor relations so that project workers would gain "a full understanding of the WPA policies." In 1940, when WPA was starting to cut back dramatically, knowledge of the Alliance's activity in the area of political education caused the Workers Education program to close down the Alliance's educational project. By this time, a frustrated and angry Lawrence Duke had chosen to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC). After his sensational testimony in September 1938, in which he identified Hardy Scott and other Communists in the Georgia unemployed movement, he and his followers withdrew from the Workers Alliance in October, resulting in the ascendancy of the Scott faction. Upon their departure from the Atlanta Alliance, Duke and his followers took the Unemployed and WPA Workers Union out of the WAA with a blast at the Alliance's Atlanta

officers as "known Communists," whose activities caused the Atlanta public to "stop supporting [his] organization just as quick as they found out we had become affiliated with the Workers Alliance of America." The Duke faction pledged their own group to the "fight against Communism." Dismissing Duke and the alleged KKK element he controlled, which failed to "break up the union," the Workers Alliance's national house organ, *Work,* steadfastly maintained that the Atlanta Workers Alliance was still "forging ahead."[26] The claims of growth made by the Alliance's house organ were exaggerated, while the impact of the internal disruption of late 1938 was vastly understated. In reality, the long-term consequence of this struggle was the eventual demise of the Workers Alliance, which was destined to fall upon hard times as the economy slowly emerged from the doldrums of the Great Depression. The impact of Red-baiting and widespread anticommunist publicity was to shatter the shaky Popular Front alliance so carefully constructed in 1937 and 1938.

While the Atlanta Communists struggled to consolidate control of the local organization in September 1938, the WAA national convention met in Cleveland to plot a course for the future of the unemployed on the national scene. Since June, Workers Alliance's national leaders had been meeting with the CIO Unemployment Committee in hopes of consummating a formal alliance that would incorporate WAA into a new CIO WPA and Relief Division, but the merger was not to be. Leery of the Alliance's radical reputation, Lewis and other CIO dignitaries sought its "complete cooperation" but postponed any decision on affiliation. While David Lasser and Herbert Benjamin expressed the Workers Alliance's fervent hopes for a direct affiliation with CIO and criticized the CIO's "entirely incorrect attitude as far as the unemployed are concerned," other issues drew the attention of southern delegates to the Cleveland convention. For Georgia and the South, the salient feature of the program was the Alliance's ongoing endorsement of regional equity in WPA compensation. The Atlanta delegation had come to the convention pledged to support an overall 20 percent wage increase and the complete elimination of the sectional wage differential. They were not disappointed by the national body, which embraced these demands and pledged to work for their implementation, a promise the Alliance fulfilled with an effort to lobby the Roosevelt administration for the recommended increases. Moreover, the Alliance convention adopted resolutions calling for a southern organizing committee and congressional enactment of an antilynching law, while instructing its national board to pressure WPA officials in Washington to guarantee that there would be no racial discrimination in its programs throughout the nation. If the Georgia membership statistics

are any guide, there was great need for an organizational drive in the South. National figures recorded 495 Georgia members, primarily from Rossville, Brunswick, and Columbus, a geographic distribution that confirmed the internal disruption then weakening the potentially powerful Atlanta locals.[27]

In response to this evidence of regional weakness, the national Alliance moved in October 1938 to revitalize the organization in the South and to "assist the Georgia organizations in straightening out their affairs after the withdrawal of the Duke faction." Within a month, Hardy Scott chose to leave Atlanta for New York, where he resided until "things cooled down" in Georgia, only to return in June 1939 as secretary of the state Communist Party. Scott's decision to flee coincided with the internal reorganization of the Atlanta Workers Alliance. The FBI's prime informant observed that this gradual awakening of the Alliance rank and file to the role played by the Communist Party and its sympathizers in the organization's affairs resulted in their removal from leadership positions. Equally significant, though unmentioned, was the chilling impact of the national CIO's September decision to avoid direct affiliation with the Alliance; while friendly ties between Atlanta's industrial unions and the local Alliance persisted, their relationship became increasingly one of polite cooperation. Meanwhile, the ousted radicals from the Scott faction "did everything within their power to create bad publicity for the Workers Alliance and to plant Communist members in the organization." A case in point was the widespread publicity over the Atlanta Board of Education's refusal to allow Lasser to speak at Commercial High School auditorium on November 4. Insisting that "the school-houses are OUR buildings" and that Lasser was "OUR representative," the Alliance denounced the action as a "vicious precedent" that endangered the civil rights of all union leaders, progressives, and other "anti-fascist speakers."[28] The Georgia Communist Party's "Newsletter" did all that it could to keep this issue, and incidentally itself, before the Atlanta public, thus calling attention to the Communist Party presence in the Workers Alliance and creating further suspicion concerning the organization's goals.

Coincident with the internal warfare within the Atlanta Alliance, the national organization followed through on the sentiment expressed at the Cleveland convention by assigning a new organizational team to Birmingham and Atlanta, consisting of an experienced unemployed organizer, John Donovan, and his wife, Sue Adams. Donovan came with orders to first rebuild the Alabama Workers Alliance, which by the end of 1938 was undergoing its own dramatic changes. Since summer 1938, the Alabama Alliance had experienced noticeable white flight, resulting in its

emergence as a predominantly black organization by the time Donovan arrived on the scene. In addition, the state Alliance had lost some of the intensity and vigor of the early and mid-1930s, gradually evolving into a more traditional unemployed organization based on a labor union model. Already on shaky ground, the body became even more isolated after the exposure of Communist influence in the national organization during the HUAC hearings of 1938. Into this volatile environment came John Donovan, whose instructions were to "improve the operation of [the Alliance's] present functioning groups and to build new organization toward the establishment of a firm state organization within Alabama." Not long thereafter, Lasser also urged him to move into Atlanta and other Georgia locales. Lasser assumed that if the Alliance could "break into Atlanta as [it] did in Birmingham, with solid organization," it would "be in a position to make rapid headway in the South."[29]

While the national organization prepared to revitalize its flagging prospects in the promising fields of Alabama and Georgia, the Atlanta Alliance maintained pressure on the WPA as vigorously as possible in view of the power struggle then under way within its leadership ranks. Local Alliance organizers faced significant obstacles, including fear of job losses, acute awareness of the "terror," and the reality of police raids that often broke up meetings. As a result, the Alliance used family home visits, wide circulation of its journal, *Work*, collaboration with remaining allies in the UAW, and frequent reference to the accomplishments of the national organization in representing the jobless. While the Atlanta Alliance enjoyed the grudging support of the Georgia liberal community, it was always under attack for its willingness to organize among African Americans. Bowing to local tradition, segregated unemployed locals operated in the city, but the Workers Alliance spoke vigorously for the black jobless, insisting that it was "actively supporting the struggle of [its] Negro brothers and sisters against discrimination on jobs and on relief."[30]

As Karen Ferguson has shown, the Workers Alliance was exceptional in that it demonstrated that working-class African Americans would respond with enthusiasm to organizations and appeals distinct from the typical nostrums offered by black elite organizations. Viewed by some middle-class groups as a pariah organization, the Alliance steadfastly embraced issues of great significance to the black unemployed, especially the majority who fell into the category of unskilled workers. A prime example may be found in its deep concern for the African American women consigned to the sewing projects, which provided employment that did not disturb the racial status quo in Georgia. Typical was the Atlanta Workers Alliance grievance committee's complaint in September 1938

against the alleged prohibition of personal conversation among sewing room workers. Comparing this regimentation to worker status in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, the Atlanta Alliance demanded a reversal in policy as well as a response to allegations of property theft already reported by its local members. Probably due to the influence of the local Grievance Committee's chair, the anticommunist Lawrence Duke, the Alliance charged that conditions on the Atlanta projects were "just as bad as any concentration camp in Germany or even in Soviet Russia." In addition, the Alliance complained of discrimination against union stewards on the projects, arbitrary assignment of cutters in Atlanta to unskilled status, and the imposition of a speed-up work incentive system in the sewing rooms. Duke complained bitterly that "there is one thing the South is tired of and that is being walked on and used as if they were floor mats." Backed by a strong statement from Herbert Benjamin and the national Alliance, the protest drew the attention of first national WPA officials and then a response from Shepperson's office, which denied all charges and reconfirmed her office policies, while offering to discuss labor-related issues.[31]

Equally important to Georgia's African American community was the fate of the numerous rural workers, tenants, and sharecroppers, who continued to be pawns in the bargaining between WPA authorities and local planters. For a moment during the summer of 1938, hopes soared when Harry Hopkins announced that an additional 200,000 jobless farm workers were to be employed on the projects throughout the South, a breakthrough hailed by STFU as the "first instance of government attention to the rural unemployed, as such, under the relief program." Hopkins defended the decision as "in line with the policy laid down by President Roosevelt when he called the South the Nation's number one economic problem." Despite this advance, the projects were to be closed down during the cotton-picking season, a provision that opened the new program to mischief on the part of local officials and planters. With harvest fast approaching, the Atlanta Workers Alliance urged WPA to ease certification of farm workers for employment on the projects and compensate them for property improvement work on the farms "as a regular WPA project." Not long thereafter, an angry Hardy Scott asked Harry Hopkins to intervene to halt the practice of "turning off men from the WPA 'to return to the farm.'" Scott argued that WPA workers should be assigned to designated projects for the improvement of farm facilities, at least until such time as real work in the fields was available for all who wanted it. He insisted that state and local officials were intentionally "mis-carrying out the President's plans," a problem that called

for a thorough "house cleaning" of Georgia obstructionists. At the same time, Scott wrote Roosevelt, imploring him to "stop the useless dismissal of farm workers" and "enlarge the quota of WPA workers in Georgia." While these appeals soon reached Hopkins's desk, the result was a pro forma response rejecting the Alliance demand with a weak deferral of responsibility for assessing need to the Georgia WPA office. Nonetheless, the battle reveals that the Workers Alliance was addressing the needs of its mass constituency among the state's widely dispersed African Americans, thus demonstrating the potential for group organization in large federal programs.[32]

The Alliance's concern for the welfare of farm workers was matched by its growing alarm in summer and fall 1938 over allegations of racial discrimination in job assignments as well as further anticipated WPA layoffs. Once Harry Hopkins had announced in July 1938 that the additional 200,000 WPA jobs had enlarged the quota for the rural South, a bevy of African American pressure groups began to exert heavy pressure on the agency to ensure that black laborers enjoyed equal access to employment on the projects. Expressions of concern poured into Washington from diverse organizations such as the National Urban League, the Atlanta branch and national office of NAACP, the editorial office of the *Atlanta Daily World*, the STFU, and the Workers Alliance. Common to these protests was an insistence that, in the words of the Atlanta NAACP branch, "Negroes in rural sections will share equitably in the work opportunity." Sensitive to the pressure, WPA's black ombudsman in Washington, Alfred E. Smith, assured the interested organizations that "every precaution [was] being taken to prevent discrimination against workers because of race or any reason during increases of the WPA rolls."[33]

Against this background of anxiety, the Atlanta Workers Alliance expressed alarm over the harsh realities of WPA employment in Georgia, which were starkly evident by September 1938. In early October, Local G1394 president H. J. Pike asserted that statewide "thousands of homeless, foodless, and nearly naked citizens of [this] state" were already "crying for aid—asking for jobs on WPA." The Alliance protested that the Georgia WPA was "sending workers back to the farms to 'gather crops,'" even though "there were no crops to be gathered." Appealing to Roosevelt, Hopkins, and Congressman Ramspeck, Pike demanded that workers in Augusta, Atlanta, and elsewhere be put back on the rolls in areas devoid of work opportunity. The Alliance flatly asserted that jobs were absolutely unavailable: "We know, we live down here." Two weeks later, the African American Atlanta Alliance Local 2 denounced WPA retrenchment, again imploring Hopkins to cancel anticipated layoffs in a

move that revealed interracial collaboration on the part of the city's unemployed movement. Atlanta's independent United WPA Union chimed in with a protest against blanket layoffs imposed without proper investigation of the individual cases affected. All of which proved futile, since despite escalating unemployment, the Washington WPA bureaucracy operated literally at the pleasure of Congress and reliant on nonexistent additional appropriations.[34]

While Atlanta was the organizing center and political hotbed of 1938, other Workers Alliance chapters worked to establish the unemployed movement's viability in geographically scattered areas. Between 1936 and 1938, for example, the North Georgia WPA district had been the site of persistent organizational efforts on the part of both the Hod Carriers Union and the Workers Alliance, which by 1938 had affiliated with the national Alliance in a combined unionization campaign among the jobless. Here, in Rossville, Chickamaugua, and Fort Oglethorpe, the focal point of the movement was an assault on arbitrary dismissals and differential wage levels, which were typically measured against rates paid in the nearby Chattanooga district. By August 1938, attention had shifted to charges of discrimination against Workers Alliance members and leaders. Similar routine contacts prevailed in downstate Muscogee County, where the Alliance local unsuccessfully attempted to mediate a dispute over transportation to the workplace in Columbus. And at the Phenix mill, unemployed union leader Homer L. Pike learned that his reward for union activism was consignment to ditch-digging work, though he also labored as Unemployed Workers Union secretary.[35] The further from Atlanta the unemployed organization operated, the more likely it was to be confined to traditional labor relations functions, which were routinely dealt with by both Washington and Georgia WPA officials.

By December 1938, the maturing unemployed movement in Georgia had made significant strides in its effort to organize and serve the state's jobless workers. There had been clear successes, particularly in Atlanta and the North Georgia district, both areas in which the Workers Alliance of America had made progress in mobilizing jobless workers and farm laborers for struggle in what began to look like a mass movement. For the first time, thousands of destitute citizens started to coalesce in an organization that was unafraid to cast its objectives and achievements in terms of class interests. The Alliance had weathered a divisive split between Communist and noncommunist leaders to build an organization that fulfilled union functions within the framework of a traditional labor relations system. Although political fissures remained beneath the surface, the unemployed movement, primarily through the vehicle of the

Workers Alliance, had assumed an advocacy and representational role for its jobless clients normally reserved for labor unions in the private sector. Part and parcel of this developmental process was a concerted campaign to rise above the limitations set by adherence to the time-honored racial practices of the traditional South. Because such a large percentage of the army of the unemployed was found in the African American community, it followed that jobless organizers were called upon to transcend the gap between the white and black jobless. As a result of their efforts, the Workers Alliance became what black organizer Hosea Hudson remembered as a militant voice for both black and white pariahs in a southern society characterized by rigid social and economic structures. Hudson recalled that the Alliance "played a major role in the daily lives of the unemployed and WPA workers" during its brief lifetime. Almost fifty years later, he insisted that since the 1930s there had not been "any such spirit" of "united daily struggles of the workers;" nor had he ever again seen such a "high level of unity action of white and Negro."[36]

By the time that John Donovan and Sue Adams arrived in Georgia with instructions to strengthen the Workers Alliance, the organization had undergone a difficult internal struggle, pitting the Communist and noncommunist elements in the leadership against one another in bitter combat. The disappearance of Hardy Scott from the Georgia political scene in October 1938 was symptomatic of the toll taken by Red-baiting of the Alliance leadership. Symptomatic of the organization's resilience, the arrival of Donovan, a Communist and former New Dealer, signaled a renewal of the battle for political leadership of the Georgia unemployed movement. Persuaded that radical credentials would not unduly hamper reorganization, an assumption supported by the Alliance's previous successes under Popular Front leadership, the Workers Alliance forged ahead with a new offensive launched as the year 1938 came to an end.

If anything, New Deal politics had placed further pressure on an organization already reeling from the Dies Committee revelations of 1938 and the very public battle between the Scott and Duke factions of the Atlanta Workers Alliance. WPA files are filled with affidavits, letters, charges, and denials from WPA officials who steadfastly insisted that politics never penetrated the internal affairs of the agency. It was widely reported, for example, that WPA workers had been coerced to vote Democratic and that their political preferences were the key to preferential treatment in subsequent hiring and assignment. During Roosevelt's attempted purge of Senator Walter George in the 1938 Democratic primary, Shepperson and other officials maintained that they had played no role in the campaign, an accurate claim on the director's part, though the activities of

her subordinates may well have departed from the agency's official policy line. Roosevelt's failed senatorial candidate, Lawrence Camp, gamely counterattacked against the critics with the assertion that he had never discussed politics with WPA authorities. Camp acknowledged that there had been complaints relating to worker assignment but insisted that they were directed at the failures of the "system." His own overriding criticism was "against the stubborn refusal of so many of the people and businesses of this state to appreciate the fact that the expenditures of federal money through WPA and the government agencies is making it possible for them to live."[37]

As it attempted to recover from devastating liberal losses in the congressional elections of 1938, the Workers Alliance prepared to renew its drive to organize in the Deep South. A central feature of this initiative was the decision to send Donovan and Adams into the southern field in late 1938. Simultaneously, the national Alliance attempted to regroup its forces for another assault on the regional peculiarities of the WPA wage structure, always a saleable issue in the economically depressed South. The Alliance's past achievements, together with this new pressure campaign, were key weapons in its revived organizational effort. Working against the troubled political history of the Workers Alliance in Atlanta, Donovan and Adams prepared to undertake a challenging assignment in the South. It was their misfortune to enter the fray at the very moment at which the economy stood poised for recovery. The stage was set for the last phase of the organized unemployed movement in Depression-era Georgia.

Winding Down

A Revived Economy and the Decline of the Unemployed Movement, 1939–1940

Reeling from the liberal electoral disaster of 1938, which had been worsened by Roosevelt's attempted purge of congressional conservatives, and suffering from the caprices of the state WPA bureaucracy, the remnants of the Georgia unemployed movement struggled to find a place in a slowly recovering economy. Having expanded its original role as a radical agent for economic change by embracing the labor union model, the Workers Alliance cooperated with other jobless organizations to serve its clients and promote more generous federal expenditures on their behalf. In part due to the factional split of 1938 and in part to the realities of a racially skewed labor market, the Alliance had increasingly become the voice of the most vulnerable elements in the black underclass. Finally, after the announcement of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939, the organization would weaken with the collapse of the Popular Front.

These changes occurred against the background of federal reorganization of works programs as well as the new economic demands created by the approach of war in Europe. With the incorporation of the WPA into a new Federal Works Agency in July 1939 and the gradual removal of project workers from the rolls in order to provide labor for the burgeoning defense industry and a recovering agricultural system, a permanent contraction of WPA employment would change the status of relief workers in all but the most economically deprived sections of Georgia. Well before American entry into World War II, the state's economy, like that of other southern states, had begun to recover as a result of defense

spending, a revived textile market, new plant construction, and the expansion of military installations. By 1940, as *Time* magazine reported, a "defense boom in Dixie" had begun, resulting in industrial recovery and, more gradually, the return of rural prosperity; consequently, federal government work relief programs entered a period of contraction. These dramatic changes meant that the Georgia Workers Alliance spoke increasingly for the black masses, whose interests were at greatest risk as cutbacks in WPA employment were implemented.[1] It is equally true that like the national Workers Alliance, the Georgia affiliate was emerging as the representative of what Executive Secretary Herbert Benjamin later acknowledged to be the "unemployables." By 1940 Benjamin had concluded that the organization had been reduced to the status of advocate for the "permanently unemployed or disemployed" and those jobless workers suffering from "dislocation from the trades and industries subject to trade and industrial union organizing."[2] Hence, from 1939 onward, the organized unemployed movement slowly receded in size and significance, operating as advocate of the hard-core unemployed. At the same time, political infighting broke out anew as the Workers Alliance struggled to avoid further identification with the Communist Party, even as the organization leadership came to be composed of prominent Communists such as the aggressive John Donovan.

By March 1939, a measure of stability had begun to return to the state's battered economy. WPA officials reported that textile mills were running full-time, fertilizer plants were hiring, sawmills were operating on a normal basis, and even agriculture had turned a corner, though farmers and farm laborers remained "a potential relief group." Yet despite an improving economy, WPA employment reached a peak in December 1938, when 67,203 workers were employed on the projects; and as late as June 1939, some 57,367 remained on the rolls, eclipsing all pre-1938 highs. The special plight of farm workers reflected the aftermath of the state WPA office's decision in fall 1938 to release all farm laborers for employment during the harvest season. Critical of the agency's policies, labor groups complained bitterly that WPA workers offered unwanted competition and that the projects carried out construction that might otherwise have gone to private employers who paid prevailing wages. In an attack on the agency's farm labor policy, Georgia unions concurred in the Workers Alliance's judgment that WPA was tolerating "legalized peonage."[3] Very little had changed in organized labor's critique of government relief and employment programs as of early 1939.

Following the withdrawal of the Duke faction in the Atlanta Workers Alliance, the Communist caucus, led by Hardy Scott and Minnie Eskew,

Table 1. WPA
Average Number of Persons Employed on Projects Semi-Annually, December 1935–June 30, 1942

Date	United States	Georgia
1935		
December	2,667,190	53,724
1936		
June	2,285,622	34,469
December	2,247,461	33,602
1937		
June	1,878,008	25,447
December	1,596,676	24,272
1938		
June	2,743,025	47,187
December	3,161,080	67,203
1939		
June	2,578,041	57,367
December	2,123,431	47,707
1940		
June	1,755,532	35,388
December	1,859,594	41,995
1941		
June	1,410,930	30,061
December	1,053,095	24,430
1942		
June	697,701	16,376

Note: Figures for the United States include territories. Figures for December 1938 include persons employed on WPA projects operated by other federal agencies (in this and all following months).
Source: WPA, *Report on Progress* (9142), p. 62, in Michael S. Holmes, *The New Deal in Georgia: An Administrative History*, table 12, p. 333 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975).

worked to preserve its position in the organization. The Communists were strengthened by the ongoing support of Lasser and Benjamin in Washington, who reportedly threatened the Atlanta local on several occasions with withdrawal of the affiliate's charter due to alleged "political discrimination against Scott and his followers." Moreover, when John Donovan came south to organize, he worked closely with Communist Party members to coordinate their union activities. Donovan, a Communist import from Washington, D.C., with a history of involvement in Workers Alliance unemployed organizing, was originally instructed to oversee the reorganization of the Birmingham party unit. An aggressive organizer, his inexperience in the mechanics of southern organizing was soon evident in his casual reliance upon African American organizers to reactivate an all-white Alabama party unit, a move that produced a rift in the group. Hosea Hudson remembered Donovan as an active participant in party meetings, where he offered advice on "how to build." By the same token, Birmingham party members found it necessary to advise Donovan on "how to work in the South." In fact, when Donovan later came to Atlanta, he was still on party probation due to his unsatisfactory work in handling the Communist Party faction at the founding convention of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW) in Birmingham. Consequently, party officials reportedly instructed Scott to "censor and closely supervise all of Donovan's activity in Atlanta."[4] Though Scott himself was forced to leave the state for six months, it is clear that his analyses of political opportunity and the future of the Workers Alliance were valued more highly by the party than that of the Alliance's national unemployed organizer on the ground.

Coincident with the arrival of Donovan, the national Alliance reemphasized its commitment to southern organizing with a renewed demand for regional wage equalization that would compensate Georgia workers more fairly. In December 1938, Lasser and Benjamin urged their prospective ally, WPA's deputy administrator Aubrey Williams, to consider wage increases for unskilled workers, a firm 25 cents per hour minimum project wage, and the removal of remaining sectional compensation differentials that disadvantaged southern workers. Moreover, the Alliance insisted that some new labor relations mechanism was needed on the projects to "free the WPA workers from intimidation and discrimination, and protect their free American right to organize and to express themselves collectively." The solution to this problem lay, according to Alliance leaders, in a new WPA subdivision to hear appeals from project workers and make binding decisions that might supersede state-level actions by overturning decisions "by officials having original jurisdiction." Simultaneously,

Lasser asked Roosevelt to inaugurate a new comprehensive plan for recovery and reemployment and to include their scheme for sectional wage equalization. Framing the proposal in terms of a broadened definition of national defense, which was intended to attract the president's attention, the Alliance insisted that true national security could best be enhanced by an expansion of Social Security, unemployment compensation, and health insurance. This appeal concluded with an expression of the "heartfelt gratitude of the millions of jobless for [the president's] consideration for their welfare and [his] efforts for recovery." Appended to the letter was a complementary message from Atlanta's Workers Alliance Local G-1394, commending the administration's "recognition of governmental responsibility for the needs of the unemployed" and expressing the hope that it would "maintain and extend the economic and social legislation which the New Deal has succeeded in winning for the American people." At the same approximate moment, the fledgling Southern Conference for Human Welfare, a reform movement warmly supported by Eleanor Roosevelt, expressed the liberal South's firm "opposition to any wage differentials on WPA projects because of geographical or other factors."[5]

To dramatize the need for greater legislative support for WPA, the Workers Alliance called an All-Southern Conference of WPA Workers, which was held in Washington, D.C., on March 20, 1939. The key target of the conferees was the congressional "economy bloc" led by Congressman Clifton Woodrum of Virginia, a group of House conservatives that was attempting to limit appropriations for WPA in early 1939. Herbert Benjamin later observed that the Woodrum Committee was "an instrument of the conservative Southern Democrats for struggle against the New Deal" and that "Communism was a pretext" for its assault on the administration's funding proposals. Congressional critics of the WPA program sought to reduce Roosevelt's $150,000,000 request, which was itself a compromise. The Emergency Relief Act also included an eighteen-month layoff provision with a mandated thirty-day furlough for needy families regardless of circumstances, as well as the exclusion of aliens and security risks from WPA employment.[6] As the army of the southern unemployed gathered in Washington, the stage was set for a dramatic confrontation on Capitol Hill.

When the All-Southern Conference of WPA Workers assembled on March 22, 1939, in the nation's capital, the fireworks began with a sweeping demand that all WPA workers had a right to keep their jobs, a challenge to the new layoff requirements. The All-Southern Conference, which claimed to "speak for all the underprivileged of the South," pragmatically expressed deep appreciation for Roosevelt's efforts on their

behalf, but insisted that he "stick to his guns in the demand for not less than $150,000,000 WPA appropriation." More than 65 delegates from all parts of the South then descended on their congressmen to oppose the cutbacks proposed by Woodrum and the economy bloc. The Workers Alliance observed that this was the first time that the southern congressmen had been forced "to face a big delegation of their own under-privileged constituents in Washington," a reality that represented an escalation in the political struggle for the rights of the unemployed. Now congressmen faced a "mass lobby from the most oppressed, the disfranchised, and the dispossessed in their constituencies." The Georgia contingent was supported by Atlanta Local G-1394's resolution attacking "reactionary influences who would heartlessly see our people starve" and demanding a "further deficiency appropriation of $275,000,000" for the balance of the year. Hardy Scott and H. J. Pike of Local No. 1 also urged an increase in quotas and repeal of the Woodrum amendment. Even Atlanta's breakaway United WPA Union, whose leader Lawrence Duke had testified against the Atlanta Workers Alliance, joined in the new battle for further WPA appropriations, arguing that cutbacks would "hurt us poor devils here in the South," especially the elderly who were confined in the sewing rooms or restricted to unskilled labor. Local No. 1 treasurer Maxine Fain made a heartfelt protest against the eighteen-month layoff, which hurt "the ones that has been here on the job a long time . . . the ones that need it because they are living from hand to mouth." And while it added its voice to the chorus of criticism leveled at the cutbacks, an independent "Amalgamated Skilled Workers" Atlanta local used the occasion to lodge a blistering attack on a local WPA administration that allegedly favored AFL members in job assignment. Denying opposition to the labor movement, the organization's secretary, Grace Darnell, argued that when periodic "quota reduction" took place, "all the undesirables are laid off." Because favoritism toward union members was "well covered up," Darnell's family lost their home and furniture and were "having to live with the neighbors daily," which they found "disgraceful." As the protests mounted, the Alliance forces gathered in Washington. In an unprecedented confrontation, Georgia Workers Alliance activist Ted Ozman, the leader of the state's delegation, forcefully challenged Georgia congressman Eugene Cox, who responded by slapping his constituent's face and rebuking him for daring to exert pressure on him. While Ozman avoided a further clash by walking out of Cox's office, *Work* berated the angry politician and asserted that "violence cannot solve any problems" and that only "organization is power." What the Alliance preferred to see in Washington was the beginning of a "great upsurge of organization

and militant vigilance" that promised to "restore the South to its rightful place in our national economy" and release from bondage the millions of oppressed who had been enslaved by the "feudal overlords of Bourbonism."[7]

Despite the Workers Alliance's vigorous lobbying effort, the House bill passed with the reductions intact and ultimately became the basis for the Emergency Relief Act, which was a bitter pill for unemployed activists to swallow. Not only were there substantial cutbacks in Roosevelt's initial allocation, but the bill contained the hated eighteen-month layoff, mandatory thirty-day furlough before recertification, and the exclusion of aliens and security risks from WPA employment. These provisions handicapped the Workers Alliance because so many members had been on WPA for extended periods and were thus forced off the projects. While some stayed with the Alliance, many others simply disappeared from the ranks or joined other organizations, thus weakening the Workers Alliance as a pressure group and union representative. For jobless African Americans, the new work-relief cuts were what the *Atlanta Daily World* regarded as a "distinct blow to Negroes" whose economic status was already "so low." The *World* insisted that with millions of citizens "short of adequate funds to sustain life," the matter of "adequate relief" was "too important to be booted around as a political football." The legislation also damaged the interests of unemployed organizations throughout the South, where they were just gaining a foothold. Hosea Hudson, for example, recalled that in Birmingham, WAA dues "fell off hard," and the organization resolved to regroup "to fight for at least unemployed relief for the unemployed."[8]

Meanwhile, in Atlanta, Donovan worked to help the victims of the mandatory layoff provisions lodge appeals and seek recertification of WPA eligibility. Deeply concerned for the Alliance's future in Georgia, he insisted on the employee's right of representation, a demand that prompted Shepperson to assert that any Alliance growth would mean that her agency would be unable to handle the anticipated intake interviews.[9] The tenor of this interaction with the organization confirms the extent to which the Alliance had evolved into a traditional labor union representing jobless workers.

Indeed, the reality that the Workers Alliance had become institutionalized in Atlanta was evident in a revival of criticism from the *faux* workers' organization led by the Democratic Party activist Mrs. Wellington Stevenson. While her erstwhile "Workers Union," which was essentially a paper organization though it claimed to have two hundred members, complained bitterly about the implementation of the layoffs, the hidden

agenda involved Democratic political action as well as an attack on the Alliance. While the Stevenson group pressures had resulted in some administrative changes in the sewing rooms and produced several WPA investigations as well as responses to isolated individual grievances, it is clear that the Georgia Women's Democratic Club and its protégés bore little resemblance to a grassroots union organization. Her elite perspective was clear when she pointedly told Senators George and Russell, Congressman Ramspeck, and WPA commissioner F. C. Harrington that her "needy ones" recently dropped from the rolls were "not the ones to go on strikes or join in revolutions," which was an oblique barb aimed at the Workers Alliance. Again rejecting the WPA's insistence on production quotas on the sewing projects and the closing of the rug-making project, Stevenson hammered away at a bloated Georgia bureaucracy that "threw out the most needy," thereby "dropping those who have no possible way of getting help anywhere . . . leaving the needy to suffer." Equally problematic, she maintained, was the constant presence of a Workers Alliance organizer who "stood around threatening our members and annoying them in every way." The middle-class champion of Atlanta's poor finally criticized WPA directly for its cooperation with the Alliance, which merely reflected the local administration's decision to recognize it as a union representative for the jobless. While WPA bureaucrats had already dismissed Stevenson as a chronic complainer, her attack on the Workers Alliance now resulted in a sharp reaction from Lasser and his organization. Sensing competitive danger in her probe, the Workers Alliance launched its own assault on Stevenson and her group, warning the WPA in Washington that in Atlanta "a political club is directly organizing a WPA workers union . . . through its membership among the supervisory forces," thus engaging in activity that it insisted should not be permitted. David Lasser clearly believed, with some justification, that an effort was underway to control project workers through top-down pressure. Lasser charged that Stevenson's activities were against the law and that it was "certainly in bad taste" for a political organization to "organize WPA workers"[10] This was a remarkable assertion from a union with such an intimate familiarity with political action as the Workers Alliance of America, a long-time promoter of the Popular Front.

More than ever, the national Alliance was convinced that Atlanta and other areas of Georgia represented an untapped field for organizational expansion. This interest was behind Lasser's visit to Atlanta in May 1939, which was widely publicized, especially in the black community. When the Alliance leader addressed a mass meeting at the Butler Street YMCA in early May, he pledged that the Workers Alliance was "not going

to let you down, but is helping you to get decent wages." Appearing side by side with John Donovan, Susan Adams, Rev. Martin L. King, Rev. R. L. Walker, and several Atlanta labor leaders, Lasser told the audience that southerners were joining the unemployed movement at a measurably more rapid rate than were northerners.[11] While he spoke to the Alliance's white and black locals in separate venues, the integrated program at the YMCA underscored the organization's defiant commitment to serving the needs of the African American community in path-breaking ways.

One reason for Lasser's Atlanta visit was a determination to publicize the Alliance's next major national effort to reverse the cutbacks in WPA employment, a National Right to Work Conference, scheduled for May 27 in Washington, D.C. In response to his appeal for support, African American Alliance Local No. 2 soon announced plans to send a delegate to the meeting. By this time, the Roosevelt administration was using the Alliance's pressure as a weapon in the battle for full employment on the projects. Not only was the conference permitted to use the Labor Department Auditorium for its meeting, but one of the featured speakers was none other than Eleanor Roosevelt. Moreover, the administration indirectly supported the conference by authorizing the WPA's David K. Niles to pay some of the bills to cover expenses incurred by the Alliance at this gathering. Lasser's personal appeal for the president's endorsement stressed the usefulness of the gathering as a platform for "speaking in the name of the principles to which [his] administration [was] dedicated." When Benjamin and Lasser met with him prior to the conference, Roosevelt underlined his agreement with the Alliance's position and promised his cooperation, but he pointedly told them that they had to "convince those sons of bitches on the Hill" and "put the heat on Congress."[12]

Roosevelt's deftness in shifting responsibility to the recalcitrant Congress, including the increasingly reactionary Southern Democrats who fought him every inch of the way, did nothing to undermine the support and admiration he enjoyed among Georgians. A case in point involved the treasurer of the rump local of the United WPA Union, who had high praise for the president. As late as June 14, she wrote Roosevelt to express her fervent hope that he would get all the appropriations he was asking for because so many Atlantans were depending on project positions. Especially concerned for older workers and long-term unemployables, Maxine Fain told Roosevelt that she disregarded the reports that he was "starving the South." On the contrary, she noted, "if it hadn't been for you a lot of the South would have starve [*sic*]." A Roosevelt loyalist, she did not "care if they call[ed] him a red or anything," as she was with him 100 percent. To her, Roosevelt had "a heart of gold

for the Southern people," who "love[d him] and . . . appreciated [him] helping the South." Insisting that she only wanted the "right to work for my living," she took aim at Congress, asserting that southern workers "know who [is] against us in Washington" and would not forget them at the next election. A contrasting view was offered by the fiery radical Nannie Leah Washburn, who, while acknowledging that Roosevelt supported work relief, scoffed at the idea that "everybody thinks that Roosevelt give us this real good New Deal." To Washburn, a dedicated Communist, "we won the WPA jobs . . . and how we won many victories was get out in droves by the thousands and thousands into Washington, White House and march, demand." A related perspective was that of the social worker Augusta Dunbar, who insisted that Roosevelt "prevented a Revolution," much to the consternation of the Communist group that "probably thought that Roosevelt did the country great harm because he prevented [that] Revolution."[13]

By July 1939, however, all the adoration focused on Roosevelt could not save an unemployed movement that struggled for survival, both in Georgia and throughout the United States. On the national scene, the Workers Alliance was entering a period of sharp decline, in part because of a barrage of negative publicity stemming from the report of the House Un-American Activities Committee, which asserted that Communists had successfully penetrated the Alliance by 1939. Facing an increasingly hostile public, the Alliance also reeled under the impact of the year's WPA cutbacks. And due to several events and changes at this time, it seemed that all efforts to aid the Georgia jobless were spinning out of control. In Atlanta, the effectiveness of Donovan's leadership came under increased scrutiny as a result of declining Alliance membership and ongoing factionalism within the organization. In April 1939, the Georgia Alliance claimed only 1,343 members in an organization of 260,000 nationwide, which was typical of southern state organizations. The major exception was the booming Alabama Alliance, still 6,692 strong. Part and parcel of the Georgia decline was the impact of Donovan's increasingly irrational behavior as the precarious nature of his own position in Atlanta became clearer. When conflict between Communist and noncommunist factions escalated, Donovan turned in desperation against his former Communist Party allies. As he worked to "throw out all the Communists that [he] could think up or dream up or suspected out of the Workers Alliance," the unpredictable Donovan clashed with Scott, who suffered a "beating at his hands."[14] With Socialist Joe Jacobs as his legal counsel, the volatile Donovan succeeded in having the charges lodged against him by Scott dismissed, but not before their ties were forever severed. While Donovan

veered toward violence, the threat of a WPA strike arose due to both layoffs and cutbacks in wage levels that aroused opposition, especially among skilled workers. Beyond this, the accumulated effect of repeated charges of Communist influence, aimed at both the national unemployed movement and the feuding Atlanta jobless organization, fatally weakened the Alliance in 1939. These events took place, moreover, against a backdrop of a gradually improving economy, which left the Workers Alliance increasingly in the position of advocate for the hard-core unemployables and chronic relief cases, the majority of them in the black community.

The enactment of the Relief Act had serious consequences, starting with the cutback in WPA jobs from 3 million to 2 million in fiscal year 1940. In addition to this blow, a pay cut resulted from the 130 hours per month requirement, which in effect destroyed the higher wage normally paid skilled workers on WPA. Finally, the Workers Alliance essentially collapsed from within, as the Georgia Alliance's internal struggle matched the escalation of tensions between Communist and noncommunist factions in the national organization. To further complicate matters, in the wake of the Woodrum Bill's enactment, protest strikes broke out on WPA projects throughout the nation, most of them focusing on the issue of the disappearing prevailing wage. While Georgia projects had experienced sporadic work stoppages earlier in the year, the situation worsened in July 1939, when George Googe, southern representative of the AFL, reported to the director of the Federal Works Agency in Washington that due to Shepperson's implementation of increased work hours and an effective cutback in wage rates for skilled WPA workers in Georgia, a protest strike was in the planning stages. More than their counterparts nationwide, Georgia's skilled project workers were divided on a response to the new standards. Shepperson reported that although some affected laborers refused to accept the change, a majority of the state's skilled WPA employees were resigned to the new rates. While sporadic outbreaks of resistance occurred in Savannah, Atlanta, Appling County, Stevens County, Baldwin County, and elsewhere, the strike was an overall failure in Georgia. In Fulton County, for example, no more than one hundred project workers were reported missing as of July 8.[15] In short, the majority of Georgia's skilled project workers were simply unwilling to risk WPA employment opportunity in order to make a point of principle; they were simply unconvinced that there was a right to strike against a government work relief program.

The failed strike was largely the result of agitation by AFL-affiliated project workers, whose resentment against the gutting of the prevailing wage had produced widespread resentment but precious little action.

The Workers Alliance, meanwhile, stood aside, quietly cheering from the sidelines. Under pressure from its own membership, the national Alliance finally announced on July 17 that it would call a one-day nationwide protest strike and demonstration. Lasser now claimed that this sympathetic work stoppage would demonstrate "unity from below" in "joint actions of all sections in organized labor." The struggling Alliance laid out a proposed program that included the restoration of the prevailing wage and an end to pay cuts on WPA, an end to the layoffs, and the equalization of regional wage structures by raising southern wages. For good measure Lasser emphasized his organization's steadfast commitment to full racial equality on the projects. All the posturing, however, failed to persuade the *Atlanta Daily World* that the WPA strikes were justified. Charging that project workers had come to view relief work as "a permanent profession," the *World* reminded African American readers that relief was essentially "charity" and that it "should be regarded as something to leave at the earliest opportunity, and not as a career."[16]

The disastrous WPA strike revealed the weakness of the Atlanta Workers Alliance and its embattled leader, John Donovan, who was displaying increasingly erratic behavior in leading a shrinking organization that was itself rent by internal unrest. As early as June 13, 1939, Lasser and Benjamin reportedly informed Donovan and Adams that their services were no longer useful to the Alliance, primarily because the "results of their organization efforts had been disappointing and not productive financially." Before long, the Alliance formally removed them from the Atlanta organization. Beyond economic stability, however, the chaotic character of the Atlanta Alliance soon became an equally important concern for Lasser and Benjamin. Both were alarmed at Donovan's decision to launch a series of "raids" on the Atlanta WPA offices in an effort to insist upon a fair hearing for Alliance members on several outstanding grievances. On July 20, Shepperson reported to Washington that Donovan had "crashed the Area gate," taking actions and using profane language that "seriously disrupted the routine work in the Area Employment Office on each occasion." At several confrontational meetings, he had "created a considerable disturbance and continued his profanity and insulting language." Despite a stern warning, Donovan told Shepperson that he "intended to continue his activities according to his own dictates until he received satisfaction, according to his own conception, of all matters brought before this Administration." On one occasion, according to a protest from Benjamin, Donovan had been threatened by a foreman with a knife in a dispute over job transfers from Fairburn to Atlanta. While Benjamin supported Donovan in urging that Shepperson resolve

the dispute, both he and Lasser were now alarmed at the damage he had inflicted on the Alliance's image in Georgia. Benjamin privately informed his Communist Party contact in Atlanta, Hardy Scott, that the Alliance feared that "unless this [behavior] were stopped it would become necessary for people there to take some drastic action which would be harmful against our organization."[17]

The private correspondence between Benjamin and Scott clearly reveals both the importance of the Alliance's institutional interests and the impact of Communist Party connections on the organization's decisions with regard to a potentially damaging situation in Atlanta, which because of its population concentration would have to be the key organizational site in Georgia. By this time Scott had returned to Georgia as both Communist state party chairman and Workers Alliance organizer. Yet even the dedicated party man Benjamin was fully conscious of the delicate political situation in Atlanta. He therefore informed Scott that some Workers Alliance activists in both Washington and Atlanta believed that his own presence would "not have a salutary effect" and might be an "embarrassment" because of his "personal views and associations." Communist credentials were now becoming an impediment to organizational progress. Nonetheless, it seemed important for Scott to "speed up the tempo a little," even though no improvement was possible until Donovan was eased out of the Atlanta organization. It was equally clear that under Donovan's direction, neither the Alliance nor the Communist Party had expanded their bases. With Scott in charge, Benjamin vainly hoped, the Alliance could stage a comeback as "part of a progressive movement in the state."[18] To advance this goal, he added, it would be vital for Scott and local Alliance leaders to emphasize the role played by the Workers Alliance in promoting the wage increases recently granted to southern project workers.

Contrary to Benjamin's hopes, the Workers Alliance in Atlanta was entering a period of irreversible decline. While Donovan and Adams became less visible after August 1939 due to the national Alliance's decision to dismiss them from leadership responsibility, the organization, wounded by internal strife and its radical image, continued to function though decreased in membership and accomplishments. Although it maintained a substantial following in Atlanta's black community, largely due to its modest successes in representing the interests of the city's most vulnerable unemployed workers, the organization's highly publicized Communist Party linkages resulted in the narrowing of its base, especially among whites. By late 1939, according to one FBI analysis, the Alliance had come to be viewed by WPA officials as well as many of its members as a

Communist front organization, especially after Benjamin admitted party membership during the HUAC hearings.[19]

The Alliance's increasingly radical image alarmed several members of the Georgia congressional delegation. In a letter to Gay Shepperson, for example, Congressman Carl Vinson expressed concern about the House Appropriation Committee's investigation of WPA, assuming that the committee would "find out the bad things about the WPA." A proud supporter of the WPA program, Vinson wanted to "defend its activities if it becomes necessary." Convinced that until recovery was complete, "the unemployed must be given employment," the worried congressman planned a speech on the subject, for which he solicited Shepperson's assistance in making the case for WPA. The result was a detailed report from the Georgia WPA office, lauding the program's many accomplishments in the state in the areas of health, education, recreation, and infrastructure improvements, all of which met the "fundamental needs of the state."[20]

WPA's substantial accomplishments failed to halt the sharp cutbacks imposed by the emergency deficiency appropriation and the new relief act for fiscal year 1940. These setbacks prompted the national Workers Alliance to urge that WPA do all that was possible to minimize the impact of the legislative mandate of 1939. In August 1939, Lasser suggested that near-term quotas be increased to minimize the extent of the coming discharges. Moreover, in keeping with the organization's emphasis since summer 1938, he also urged that wage hikes for southern workers be increased, without reducing wages on other projects nationwide. Finally, he insisted that there be no discrimination of any kind in the implementation of the discharges required by law. When F. C. Harrington replied that WPA was doing all that was possible to minimize distress in very difficult circumstances, he professed some confusion over Lasser's requests. Lasser responded by commending the agency for its increase in wages paid in the South, while insisting that short-term quotas be raised and that in reassignments after the thirty-day layoff, there was "opportunity for all kinds of discrimination, favoritism, etc." At the very least, he argued, there must be adequate provision for speedy reviews, adjudication, and "correction of any injustices."[21]

At the same approximate moment, Lasser was also engaged in an effort to quell the internal conflict within the Atlanta locals, which had been engaged in trench warfare resulting in a series of expulsions and suspensions over matters relating to financial management as well as political differences. Confronted with organizational chaos in the wake of the Scott-Donovan struggle as well as a dispute over local bookkeeping,

the national organization told Atlanta leaders that due to the "turmoil" in the local, it was "impossible for proper affairs to be conducted." However, Lasser assured the local membership that the Workers Alliance was "going to be conducted in Atlanta in a democratic fashion" that would "permit people of all political beliefs to hold their membership."[22]

By October 1939, the Atlanta Workers Alliance was regrouping for another struggle to reverse the WPA cutbacks, including the eighteen-month layoff and thirty-day waiting period. In a complementary protest, Esther Avery of United WPA Union Local 1 begged WPA Projects Commissioner F. C. Harrington to "do something about the 30 day layoff in midwinter," which would soon affect "scores and scores" of people, including "some women that have no one to take care of them and can't get work and where else on account to there [*sic]* age." Her plea produced only the standard referral to local authorities, with a notation of legislative restrictions then in operation. While the Atlanta Workers Alliance was now more than 65 percent African American in composition, it still managed to coordinate an integrated march on the WPA offices and city hall, where its leaders demanded more jobs for the unemployed. After a conference with agency officials, Atlanta WPA authorities agreed to hear protests from a joint committee composed of both the black and white Alliance locals. While J. A. Moreland led the African American local, another familiar face turned up in the person of the controversial John Donovan, who had resurfaced as spokesman for the protesters. By this time, Donovan had broken with the Communist Party and now vied with Scott for leadership of the Atlanta Alliance, absent the imprimatur of the organization's national leadership. While Moreland reported that more jobs were in the offing for African American workers, the harsh reality was that WPA positions had been reduced by 50 percent since June and were not likely to be restored. At this meeting, both Mayor William B. Hartsfield and Donovan promised to do "whatever possible in getting more work projects,"[23] but the five hundred demonstrators were doomed to be disappointed. No amount of local protest could counteract the effect of congressional reductions, fiscal conservatism, Red-baiting, and a slowly improving economy.

The impact of WPA retrenchment was especially harsh on the Atlanta African American population. As noted by the *Atlanta Daily World*, the relief act had meant that 780,000 workers nationwide had been "thrown off the rolls," and that another 1,250,000 remained on the waiting lists, a disproportionate number of them African American workers. The disparity resulted because blacks consistently "find it harder to find employment in private industry than do the whites." In a slap at HUAC,

the *World* argued that the country's best antidote to foreign ideologies would be "applying itself to the task of removing every existing excuse these [radicals] might lay hand on in order to amass the proper following they desire."[24] Confronted by residual African American unemployment, Atlanta's black press thus took aim at lingering racial discrimination, political disenfranchisement, and economic disparities, all of which were fueling the support garnered by leftist political and economic organizations such as the Communist Party and the Workers Alliance.

As the Alliance struggled for survival in Atlanta, it worked to maintain a precarious foothold in other Georgia communities. In Augusta, for example, the Alliance organization joined the rising protests over the layoffs that were already affecting "a large group of workers in this city." The Augusta Alliance charged that WPA workers were being laid off due to allegations of "unsatisfactory service," which enabled the local welfare office to deny them public assistance because of an "offense for which they are not guilty." Touching upon one of Georgia's key problems, local president W. M. Thomas argued that the situation was "especially serious" because state and local governments claimed to have "no funds to care for the workers being laid off." In a plea to Aubrey Williams, Thomas urged that pressure be brought to bear on Shepperson to halt "discrimination" against blameless Georgia workers. Recognizing Williams as a steady ally of the jobless, he expressed concern that he had not been selected to replace Harry Hopkins, though the Alliance remained confident that the WPA would "not overlook the deplorable situation facing several thousand workers in [Augusta]." Both the Alliance and the Augusta Central Labor Union (CLU) were convinced that corruption and favoritism were rampant in the city's WPA bureaucracy. The CLU told AFL president William Green that "many people who do not need a job are holding positions in local relief offices and drawing fabulous salaries, thereby keeping many deserving people out of work." After Green had protested to WPA administrator F. C. Harrington, Washington denied the charges, insisting that the agency's administrative employees were "selected on the basis of ability to perform the work required" and earned salaries that were certainly not "fabulous," in that they were demonstrably lower than those in most other federal agencies.[25]

While Augusta's craft unionists badgered the WPA in Washington, the city's Workers Alliance struggled with antiunion practices on the local projects. Forced to remove their union buttons, Alliance workers successfully appealed that decision and won the right to display their union sympathies on the job. And like the CLU, the Alliance local fought the "reactionary Democrats" who controlled the Augusta WPA administration. In

September the Alliance's E. D. Weathersbee decried the "red tape" used to delay or deny relief to the unemployed with the argument that state job quotas had been exceeded. The organization lodged a vigorous protest against decertifications and selective granting of relief, calling for an investigation of WPA practices in Augusta. Charging that discrimination was rife, the Alliance demanded explanation of "where the relief money is going."[26]

Even more alarming to Georgia Alliance activists was an episode of violent resistance to the organization's efforts to organize African Americans in Fairburn, not far from Atlanta. In May 1939, when Donovan succeeded in organizing a black local in that community, area vigilantes threatened violence in an effort to intimidate the forty-five new recruits. Ignoring the danger, Donovan and black Alliance activists J. R. Powell and his son T. R. proceeded to hold a meeting on May 29 in defiance of the white critics. One month later, the Powells were dragged from their home and beaten with straps by local citizens who warned them to "do no more organizing." Among the assailants were several Fairburn policemen and a city councilman, whose presence lent an air of credibility to the actions taken. In a separate but related incident, NYA (National Youth Administration) worker Eliza J. Harrison was also assaulted by a group of white youths on the main street of Fairburn. The local vigilantes, in the words of the *Atlanta Daily World*'s William A. Fowlkes, simply "won't see the Negro organize in any way." Fowlkes charged that the Powell family had been beaten and run out of town so that others would be "taught a lesson" and discouraged from WPA union organizing activity. He observed that due to a slow job market, blacks were "put out of their jobs to make places for those whites 'fallen from above' to places less secure." The resulting glut of African American project workers, he argued, meant that "any effort to organize for security through unionization" by black WPA workers was now "met with the same action as the vigilante committees once performed in the smaller communities, or, more familiar, the Ku-Klux Klan." It was, as Fowlkes observed, "the good old Southern way."[27]

Unwilling to accept intimidation without a challenge, the Alliance and the Atlanta NAACP swung into action. NAACP turned immediately to the WPA's black ombudsman, Alfred E. Smith, reporting that the Workers Alliance organizers and their clients had been victimized by the "white citizens of Fairburn," who were hell-bent on "preventing the organization of colored workers." The result was a Justice Department investigation, an NAACP fund-raising drive to aid the Fairburn victims, and, perhaps most important, the Workers Alliance's eventual success in organizing

a local, despite the "savagery" unleashed on some of its members. Once WPA had completed a preliminary investigation, Smith reported to the Atlanta plaintiffs that the incident was perpetrated by persons outside the agency and was therefore subject to the "exercise of the local police power." Reasserting the right of project workers to unionize, Smith urged that any evidence that Georgia WPA officials were violating existing labor relations regulations be communicated to either Shepperson or Smith himself. Despite the equivocal statement, the Alliance promised to help ensure that African American constitutional rights and personal freedoms would be protected.[28]

The Fairburn incident also produced a moment of unity among organizations interested in the status of African American workers in Georgia. Following its own investigation, the Atlanta NAACP identified the Fairburn vigilantes by name, thus revealing the direct involvement of public officials in the intimidation of Workers Alliance organizers and the flogging of the Powell family. Its report on the incident declared that the right to organize was "well recognized in the law" and was "fast becoming one of our closely guarded civil rights," which made it imperative that such mob action be "stamped out" by the Justice Department. Likewise, the *Atlanta Daily World* concluded that the right to organize on federal projects must be preserved and that the perpetrators of the mob violence be punished for their deeds.[29] As a result of the Fairburn excesses and the united action that followed, the Alliance had managed to solidify its support among jobless African Americans, its position enhanced through collaboration with black Atlanta's most prominent elite group.

Further to the south, the Workers Alliance survived to fight in other communities in which large African American populations experienced extensive unemployment. A case in point involved the project workers of Columbus, close to the Alabama line and not far from the influence of that state's militant Communist Party and jobless activists. In Columbus, a strong Alliance organization was especially active in assisting unemployed black workers and their families in dealing with unsympathetic welfare department bureaucrats, thus extending the concept of the union as social family. In May 1939, for example, the organization worked to secure the reversal of a local policy requiring medical excuses for missed workdays, which meant added expense for relief workers who already lived close to the margin. To George Reese of the Columbus Alliance, it seemed that "someone wants to make the life of WPA workers just as miserable as humanly possible" in a way that was sure to "increase the suffering of those who have suffered the most." The local Alliance failed "to find grounds to class all relief workers as chiselers." In agreement with

this assessment, chapter chairman W. M. Lisle added that unemployed workers got little help from local hospitals, doctors, or local WPA officials, who failed to follow Shepperson's previous agreement to accept affidavits from neighbors and family members. In a desperate letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, veteran Columbus Alliance president Albert Cox maintained that project workers were starving and that local WPA administrator E. J. Moyle and welfare department officials had been coldly unhelpful. From a worker's perspective, Cox insisted, the president needed to know of the "unscrupulous manner the enemies of our people are handling relief in Georgia."[30]

Before long the Columbus local turned to the national Workers Alliance for assistance in its struggle against callous management practices and open criticism of union organizations such as the Workers Alliance. Local grievance committee chairman Robert Wilson now launched a broadside attack on Jordan High School Project foreman A. M. Henly, who was openly "hostile to members of the Workers Alliance" as part of a "scheme to break up [the] organization." Moreover, Wilson told Benjamin, Henly had attacked a worker on the job and openly asserted his desire to "get rid of the job steward," a statement that the Alliance correctly understood as "decidedly hostile to [the Alliance] and out of bounds of the rules and regulations of the WPA." Wilson naively insisted that national authorities would certainly act if Washington understood "the way people are subjected to intimidation in the ranks of the WPA in Columbus." Under pressure from both the Columbus local and Herbert Benjamin, Shepperson denied all charges and insisted that further negotiations had smoothed over the differences.[31]

Dissatisfied with bureaucratic buck-passing within the WPA, Benjamin complained in September 1939 to Commissioner Fred Rauch in Washington, attaching affidavits charging corrupt practices, intimidation, and discrimination by Columbus authorities, problems that had not been resolved by the Georgia administration. While discussions with Shepperson's office had been "helpful in bringing about a better understanding and relationship," continuing evasiveness had only led to "further suspicion as to the good faith of the administration in the treatment of complaints." Benjamin reiterated his conviction that Columbus administrators remained hostile to the Workers Alliance and deeply resented its presence on the projects. To Alliance officials in Washington, the Columbus problem mirrored a deeper concern over the organization's "experience in recent months with various disputes that [had] arisen in Georgia." While Shepperson's responses had always been courteous and typically offered assurances that honest investigations would lead to fair decisions,

Benjamin saw no evidence that the state office had made a "serious and honest effort to eliminate abuses."[32] In desperation, Cox finally turned to Eleanor Roosevelt with an appeal for intervention since "so many of our people are starving and we don't seem to get nothing [*sic*] but further discrimination from our appeals" at the hands of "people hostile to the New Deal." Not long thereafter, Rauch did communicate with Cox in Columbus, but was unable to offer any assistance with local relief problems, which he claimed was outside his jurisdiction. While he agreed to follow up on the affidavits and charges lodged earlier, he could only offer to bring the names of needy citizens to the attention of Shepperson's office with a recommendation that their eligibility for WPA employment be reconsidered.[33]

As the Alliance's frustration with Columbus officials increased, the organization fought a comparable battle in Savannah and Chatham County in the extreme southeastern corner of the state. In this area, the Workers Alliance served a largely African American population, which consistently claimed that WPA administrators discriminated in job assignment. In July 1939, the Savannah Alliance told Commissioner F. C. Harrington that the Chatham County administrators "don't want the colored sewers on these projects." Charging outright racial discrimination, the organization asked federal officials for their cooperation by refusing to approve project renewal of any sewing project in Chatham County unless black workers were "given some kind of consideration." And in September similar allegations were made concerning discrimination on a local drainage project, which resulted in a meeting with local Workers Alliance leaders who were told that "the requisition called for white workers on this *particular* project." Chatham County administrators admonished the Alliance protestors with a warning that they "should not consider any one particular unit as a basis for discrimination," but the administrators did pledge to give the Alliance's criticisms "every consideration." The end result was an increase in black assignments to the new drainage project, once a new authorization had been received.[34]

By late 1939, conditions in the Savannah area had again deteriorated, prompting the Workers Alliance to approach African American WPA contact Alfred E. Smith in Washington with a plea for an impartial investigation of discrimination in Chatham County. On November 16, Savannah Alliance president M. D. Inabinett and local activist Joseph Smith reported that WPA officer John Wilkins Jr. not only failed to bargain with the Alliance "as a group for the workers" but also refused to meet with them as individuals. The organization maintained that Wilkins's predecessor, Lloyd Cummings, was always "impartial" and "did not

discriminate in regards to creed or color." Always ready to adjust matters and help the black unemployed, Cummings was regarded by the Alliance as "a gentleman with courage and ability to eliminate all unfair practice." Once again in December, the Alliance repeated its charges against Wilkins and called for Smith to "relieve the unfair practices of local government on WPA." In a companion letter to Commissioner Fred Rauch in Washington, the local organization insisted that federal policy was being grossly violated in Savannah, where Wilkins and social worker Mildred Paterson were using the eighteen-month layoff to "discipline the Negroes for union activities." Inabinett and Smith maintained that Paterson had "always fought against the betterment of the poor colored people in the past" and was now refusing to "bargain intelligently and collectively" with their representatives. Wilkins, in turn, reportedly told those who appealed that he "did not have time to bother with the Negroes" and intended to "devote his time to putting the white people to work," a response that the Workers Alliance regarded as an "improper phrase, for a trustee of the government to use to American citizens, regardless of color." These charges brought a follow-up from Benjamin, who demanded a response from WPA officials in Washington.[35]

The initial Workers Alliance protests brought action from Alfred E. Smith but resulted in a pro forma reaction from the Georgia WPA office, a result that to the Savannah Alliance looked like a bureaucratic runaround. Inabinett learned that his complaint had been referred back to the Atlanta office, which concluded that Wilkins had not refused to bargain with the Alliance at all; what Wilkins had allegedly meant to communicate was that while all appeals and complaints would be heard, no organization had been recognized as the exclusive bargaining agent for Savannah's unemployed project workers. Under pressure from Washington, Wilkins now agreed to be available at a specified time, though some hearings might be delegated to subordinates. Furthermore, state officials in Georgia accepted Savannah's denials of discrimination and essentially confirmed Wilkins's claim that African Americans had been assigned proportionate to need within the limits of quotas in place. Then, in a classic bureaucratic maneuver, the director of Georgia's Division of Employment suggested that the Alliance take up any further questions with Wilkins in Savannah.[36] It is likely that the complaints of the Alliance and the Chatham County black community were well founded, but bureaucratic inertia and deeply ingrained southern racial attitudes combined to frustrate their goals. In Savannah, as in Columbus, racism lay not far beneath the surface in the debate over labor relations on government work relief projects.

The national Workers Alliance in Washington presented a more formidable challenge to WPA administrators, who, in deference to the organization as a pressure group, responded to Benjamin's inquiries about Savannah with a reassuring note that promised action at the state level. Rauch insisted that there had been a "misunderstanding" of Wilkins's remarks, which did not constitute a refusal to bargain but merely denied exclusive bargaining rights to any organization. Moreover, he argued, the pressure of numbers in Savannah simply made it impossible to hear all complaints at the senior level of responsibility. Rauch claimed that statistics revealed no significant change in the ratio of blacks and whites on the Chatham County projects, thus casting doubt on any allegations of discrimination. It appeared from a distance that the complaints of furloughed workers were related to the mandate for recertification and the resulting categorization of certified workers according to need.[37] In short, Washington denied discrimination, defended local officials, and passed the buck to the state administration in Atlanta.

The Savannah Alliance was not the only Chatham County group to experience evasive treatment at the hands of WPA authorities in Washington. One longstanding point of contention involved funding for African American educational programs as well as dilatory tactics in the assignment of African American women to the Chatham County training projects and sewing rooms. As early as June 1939, black high school principal Sophronia Tompkins had written Eleanor Roosevelt to encourage her intercession in failing efforts to raise the necessary local funds to expand a training school and erect a workshop and cannery for community use by African Americans. The intended result was to be a training facility and a self-help project that would aid rural black citizens. "Knowing [Mrs. Roosevelt's] deep interest in underprivileged groups," and aware of her earlier experience in teaching and social service work, Tompkins asked for help in raising the $3,000 needed to complete the project. All this brought an unimaginative response from WPA, informing Tompkins that while Mrs. Roosevelt had a "sympathetic interest" in her plight, it would be necessary to secure a public tax-supported sponsor to bring federal assistance for the Savannah proposal. In an often-heard refrain, the local educators were advised to consult with local WPA officials or the state WPA office, neither of which was likely to be enthusiastic about support for such a project.[38]

No more successful were the black workers who charged "corrupt practices" in the assignment of African Americans to a variety of Chatham County projects. Likewise, Workers Alliance appeals against the dismissal of several female sewing room workers on account of their alleged

lack of productivity fell on deaf ears. In a protest to Harrington, Joseph Smith contended that "these workers was not given a square deal, for the simply reason, they should have transferred to another job, but instead they was put into the street [*sic*]." In early 1940, the local Alliance urged Harrington to ensure that these workers be reassigned to other employment as a matter of fairness so they might "earn their bread." An unsympathetic John Wilkins denied any unusual productivity demands and simply stated that these workers had been fired for "incompetence." More subtle was Earnest Marbury of the Georgia Division of Employment, who defended the release of workers unable to reach project standards while assuring the Alliance that such action did not prevent a worker from "receiving consideration for assignment at some other type of work for which he may be qualified."[39] The response was more sophisticated, but the message was the same: agency policy took precedence over any extraordinary conditions or human needs. Such responses translated into continuing frustration for African Americans in Chatham County, whose struggle with local officials had a long and unhappy history.

By June 1940, the Workers Alliance in Georgia had become more isolated and essentially neutralized as an effective pressure organization. Its decline mirrored the increasingly sectarian character of the national organization, which was also undergoing its final internal conflict as Communists and noncommunists struggled for control of a declining unemployed movement. From the time of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939, David Lasser urged Benjamin to deemphasize his Communist affiliation and finally forced him to give up his position as WAA secretary in early 1940. Under pressure from Earl Browder, Benjamin agreed to resign as a "sacrifice . . . in the interest of the united front." But Communist influence in the Workers Alliance remained strong due to party control of the national executive board. The internal battle reached a climax in June when David Lasser resigned the presidency, charging that the Communist faction on the executive board was attempting to win dominance over Alliance policies for "a political group." Lasser's decision marked an important turning point in the history of the Workers Alliance, which had for some time been integrated into the structure of the welfare state and, as the economy edged toward recovery, had only "a skeleton of an organization left."[40]

The same could be said for the tattered remnants of the Workers Alliance's Georgia affiliate, which had assumed traditional union functions and been essentially co-opted into the WPA labor relations system. Bedeviled by WPA bureaucrats and hampered by the visible hand of racism, the state Alliance soldiered on in service to a shrinking clientele as the

economy gradually improved. For all practical purposes, the state's organized unemployed movement was nearing an end, though the deeply dispossessed remained an ugly sore on the body politic. From this time forward, the primary adherents of Georgia's unemployed organizations were to be found in the hardest-pressed elements in the African American community and, to a lesser extent, the most unemployable denizens of the white underclass.

The Crucible of War

Unfinished Business

From 1939 on, the onset of war in Europe and Asia provided a badly needed boost to a Georgia economy that, like the economies of many southern states, had not always shared equally in national prosperity. Even before the entry of the United States into World War II, the impact of defense spending had added to the stimulus provided by federal investment during the New Deal years. With the development of the aircraft industry in Marietta and the shipbuilding complex of coastal Georgia, the scourge of unemployment was gradually replaced by the cleansing influence of job opportunity. As the nation mobilized for war, the expansion of military installations throughout the state provided an added boost to a developing wartime economy. The result of federal spending was a reconfirmation of the lesson learned by Georgians during the Great Depression: namely, the concept that the well-being of Georgia workers was intimately related to the increasing presence of the central government in their lives. So it was that the war accelerated the nationalizing trends set in motion by the New Deal, including the provisions of the social welfare state. And finally, even the jobless occupants of the bottom tier on the state's social and economic ladder would come to benefit from the institutionalization of a modern system of social provision. Consequently, the coming of war marked an end to the unemployed movement of the 1930s and the mass mobilization it fostered. With the Popular Front in shambles after the announcement of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the Workers Alliance was to fall on hard times, collapsing when wartime mobilization

created employment for all but the hard-core "unemployables" that it had increasingly represented since 1939. As the Alliance went, so went the fleeting hopes of radicals to build a coalition of the poor as a force for social action in Georgia.

While the national economy slowly recovered from the stagnation of the 1930s, a nagging residual problem remained for jobless workers whose skills were not in demand in the increasingly industrialized work environment of prewar America. With the national unemployment rate hovering at 15 percent in 1940, a troublesome employment issue was yet to be resolved on the eve of American intervention into World War II. The plight of the "unemployables" persisted, posing a problem that was complicated by the gradual withdrawal of federal support for work relief. Not long before her departure as Georgia's WPA administrator, Gay Shepperson underlined the lingering problem facing the state's workforce. In September 1939, she observed that although some new employment was evident in north Georgia, it was not likely that the European war would result in major gains in the near future. Since Georgia was "fundamentally" an agricultural state, she noted, its crops were "considered as non-essentials for war purposes." In short, she concluded, war-related economic activity was unlikely to quickly "offset the depressing influence caused by the contemplated unfavorable agricultural situation." At the time of her prediction, some 39,000 Georgia workers were still employed by WPA, a number that was to increase to 42,000 by January 1941. During calendar year 1940 more than 80,000 Georgians had received unemployment compensation checks. Like Shepperson, the Georgia Federation of Labor concluded in July 1940 that "the problem of unemployment remains unsolved," an economic dislocation that cried out for a solution for which the AFL "recognized its responsibility." Parting ways with the veteran administrator, however, the state Federation concurred in the AFL position that WPA was becoming more a problem than a solution: as early as January 1940, the *Atlanta Journal of Labor* asserted its belief that WPA's support for the jobless worker did not "enable him to look forward to the time when he will become an asset rather than a liability."[1]

Georgia trade unionists may thus have acknowledged a duty, but their concern failed to reach beyond the skilled operatives the state Federation typically represented, leaving to other, less mainstream organizations the task of protecting the discards of a still-damaged economic system. By mid-1940, this job had fallen to the much-maligned Workers Alliance, which was soon to crumble under the pressure of internal disruption and external attack. In June 1939, Herbert Benjamin arrived at the conclusion

that there was still a need for the Alliance as an organization to promote the "actual mobilization of the masses for struggle" in the field of Communist Party unemployed work. Yet always a realist, Benjamin asserted in 1940 that the organization had deteriorated to the point that it organized the "residue . . . the weakest and the most unorganizable, the most pauperized and most exhausted and dispirited" of the nation's unemployed. As late as April 1940, Georgia Workers Alliance chapters existed in Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Brunswick, Savannah, and Dalton. By summer, following Socialist David Lasser's sensational resignation from the presidency, most of the state's Alliance groups were operating under the umbrella of a new American Security Union organized by Lasser, the Socialist Party, and other refugees from the Communist-dominated national Workers Alliance of America. Once a successful Popular Front mass organization, the rump Alliance had evolved into a Communist Party front group in the wake of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Since summer 1939, moreover, Socialists had worked at the national level to create a noncommunist alternative to the Alliance, an "all-inclusive unemployed movement" with close ties to organized labor, a group that gained some adherents, especially in the Northeast and Midwest. This Workers Security Federation, created by Socialists who agreed to "sever their connection with the Workers Alliance," took the form of the American Security Union in Georgia, where it failed to gain significant support.[2]

To FBI observers, the Atlanta American Security Union (ASU) was merely a front for the remnants of the discredited Workers Alliance, which changed its name in order to avoid the radical image that had resulted from the well-publicized internal struggles of the local organization. According to the files of the Atlanta Better Business Bureau, the Workers Alliance's white local had reorganized as the ASU, while the black local operated under the name of the National Security Union. By September 1940 communication between the union and the WPA authorities had broken down, partly as a result of changes instituted the previous year in order to circumvent the troublesome protest demonstrations of John Donovan. To restore orderly labor relations on the Atlanta projects, city WPA officials suspended the established practice of holding regular Saturday morning meetings with Alliance representatives. In the name of the American Security Union, the increasingly marginalized David Lasser attacked this change as "a pretty dictatorial attitude on the part of the WPA" that was "not promoting good labor relations in Atlanta."[3]

Responding to Lasser's criticism, the Atlanta WPA office explained that in 1939 it had agreed with Donovan to establish a systematic grievance procedure involving regular meetings, which had deteriorated into

a "series of one man demonstrations" in which the Alliance demanded preferential treatment of its members in assignment to the projects. As a result, regular meetings had been replaced by a written request process that promised more satisfactory outcomes. Furthermore, when the new procedures were discussed with the Workers Alliance in June 1940, it became clear that Donovan had never passed on the procedural changes to the locals, which explained the breakdown in communication of which Lasser and the ASU complained. While the Saturday sessions continued into September 1940, the Security Union locals now objected to the prior notification requirements, which WPA officials deemed necessary for orderly discussion to take place. Denying any unwillingness to meet, the authorities charged the ASU locals with refusal to cooperate and insisted that such conferences not consist of routine requests for assignment preference or consideration of topics that had "already been discussed to exhaustion."[4] While the WPA position was probably justified, it was also designed to discourage the relatively inexperienced representatives of the new American Security Union from pressing their arguments with an increasingly impersonal agency bureaucracy.

In isolated instances, the Workers Alliance reappeared in other parts of the state, typically as an advocate for hard-pressed African Americans. While the *Atlanta Daily World* glumly reported that the depth of black unemployment mandated further WPA expenditures, and African American project workers asked "what would we have done without the WPA," the Columbus Alliance demanded that Georgia's congressmen and senators take action to "get appropriations" that would keep Americans from "starving" and halt the "terribly unfair method of laying off WPA workers" under the eighteen-month layoff clause that caused "untold suffering." According to Columbus WPA supervisor Katherine Rogers, the organization caused "a great deal of trouble," lodging "every type of complaint imaginable." The Columbus Alliance, though Communists participated in its activities, was largely composed of noncommunist workers who were drawn to an organization that still carried out union functions and worked to protect their interests on the job, thus remaining a thorn in the side of WPA authorities. By 1940, the local Alliance and its leader, African American Albert Cox, were providing "a fairly good degree of cooperation" in the resolution of workplace differences, though charges of discrimination against Workers Alliance members constituted a persistent theme in local labor relations. As its members gradually returned to private employment, however, the Columbus Alliance lost members, and by early 1941 the organization was "practically defunct."[5]

Meanwhile, stubborn to the end, the Savannah Alliance dissidents persistently hounded WPA officials with charges of racial discrimination in Chatham County. As late as September 1940, the aggressive African American Workers Alliance leader, M. D. Inabinett, charged Savannah WPA authorities with arbitrary layoffs of black women on the sewing projects and their replacement with white workers. In addition, he reported that a Negro Workers Project had been closed and replaced by an all white project, while blacks "were left to remain idle in the streets." Worse yet, when the union committee challenged District Adviser H. Wallace on his decisions, he admitted that he had made the change and proclaimed that if the Alliance was dissatisfied with his action, he "would put all the colored women in the streets." To Inabinett, this attitude constituted "intimidation to the workers and a threat of the workers' rights[,] also a violation of WPA policies." The true meaning of the policy change was, in the words of one group of furloughed Alliance workers, evident in the stark reality that "these poor people are destitute without shelter over their heads or clothes or shoes to send their children to school [*sic*]."[6] With locals active as late as January 1941 in both Savannah and nearby Brunswick, the Workers Alliance remained the primary non-elite organization speaking for the African American unemployed in Chatham County. Confronted in early 1941 with charges of radical influence, the Savannah local dissolved its ties with the American Security Union and also broke with the traditional Workers Alliance to form the "Workman's Alliance," in hopes of removing any lingering suspicions concerning Communist control of the area unemployed movement. Yet this shift involved little more than a cosmetic change for public relations purposes, since the organization continued to welcome outside support for its efforts, radicalism aside.

On several occasions, the Savannah Alliance's charges were supported by Communist Frank Ingram, Lasser's successor as national Workers Alliance president. On September 16, 1940, Ingram wrote Malcolm Miller in Washington to repeat the allegation that racial discrimination had occurred in Savannah. He followed up with a complaint against the Alliance's old nemesis, John Wilkins, whom he insisted had discriminated against a local project worker "because of her membership in the Workers Alliance." Despite the Alliance's constant pressure, Georgia officials succeeded in persuading national WPA authorities that all reassignments in Savannah had been made due to financial exigency and federal policy. The hidden perspective of Georgia WPA officials was revealed in assistant administrator C. A. Strickland's concluding assertion that "on numerous occasions the Committee of the Workers Alliance of America, as

represented by Chairman M. D. Inabinett, [had] approached the District officials in a very abrupt and demanding way," which disrupted the "working relationship which normally exists between our District Office and this group."[7] Denials of discrimination by state WPA officials provided cover for a local administration in Savannah that had often dealt harshly with the area's large African American population. It is clear from Georgia's vigorous objections that the continuing pressure exerted by the Savannah black community's only organizational voice had touched a nerve in a delicate situation, sometimes resulting in damage to the interests of jobless people of color. It is equally obvious that the intrusion of what seemed an alien organizational entity had shaken the local advocates of the "Southern way of life," as practiced in Deep South Georgia. But in the final analysis, traditional racial discrimination continued to hold sway, abetted by the indifference of an unresponsive federal bureaucracy.

By 1941, the wartime stimulus had begun to penetrate the economies of even the most agricultural states of the South such as Georgia, where the defense industry began to create a demand for workers in industrial communities such as Atlanta, Marietta, Augusta, and Savannah. In January the state WPA concluded that unemployment was at its "lowest level in several years," but that a serious residual problem existed among agricultural laborers and unskilled urban workers, who made up the bulk of project employees. In 1940 Georgia still had 150,000 claimants on the books, a figure that suggested a lingering economic sluggishness. Not surprisingly, WPA began to adapt its own programs to the national defense effort at an early date, embracing an idea that had been advanced by the national Workers Alliance as early as December 1938, when Lasser had tried to persuade Roosevelt that because "national defense means more than rearmament," adequate compensation of WPA workers "be included in any program for national defense and recovery." In May 1941, for example, the Atlanta Workers Service Project reported an acceleration of programming for black and white servicemen, defense workers, and civilian groups whose morale was essential to national defense. And after American entry into the war, WPA expanded its programs to include new war-related projects, including training of recreational specialists, hospital workers, defense nutrition workers, and clerical workers for civilian defense organizations. State WPA director H. E. Harman asserted in December 1941 that the agency and its "large pool of labor" stood "ready to assume even greater wartime duties."[8]

Although the WPA was moving to join the defense effort, unemployment had not disappeared from the economic scene in Georgia. In August

1941 Harman reported that drought and blight had damaged agricultural production while joblessness had ticked upward, partly due to transition unemployment that temporarily displaced industrial workers in specified localities. Meanwhile, the uneven recovery meant that in July 1941, some thirty thousand Georgia workers remained employed on the WPA rolls. Softness in the economy convinced state WPA authorities of the need for a quota increase, especially for rural laborers and older, disabled, or poorly trained workers; in short, the chronic "unemployables" remained a lingering problem in Georgia. Harman assured Washington that he had projects on which these workers could be placed and promised to distribute employment "outside the defense areas" and in those urban and rural sections "where employment conditions [were] poor and suffering was great." In December Harman renewed his request for additional jobs, noting persistent unemployment in rural areas, where the job situation was "worse than it has been for years." Asking for an immediate approval for three thousand jobs, he insisted that the need for WPA assistance in Georgia was "desperate."[9] Even as war production gained impetus, significant transition unemployment plagued the state's workers, especially outside the rapidly recovering industrial areas of Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah. As late as March 1942, Harman was reporting that this "disemployment" was certain to "continue for some time as more restrictions are placed on civilian goods and stocks of present supplies are exhausted."[10]

Although transition unemployment and rural joblessness remained a drag on the Georgia economy, the broader expansion meant that in booming defense communities, work was widely available. Under these circumstances, the prospects for unemployed organizing were dim to nonexistent. Symptomatic of the changed environment was WPA's decision in March 1941 to employ former unemployed organizer David Lasser as a special labor consultant with responsibility for advising the agency on the "problems of reemployment of WPA workers in private industry." In a futile attempt to capitalize on Lasser's new position, Atlanta's American Security Union contacted the state WPA office to arrange for an appointment to discuss "cooperation" with ASU. While Georgia WPA director Harman originally assumed that Lasser would have authority to "call mass meetings of the unemployed," Washington saw his role in a different light. Although Acting Commissioner Howard Hunter "had no objection" to a meeting with the Atlanta union people, he made it clear that "Lasser works for the WPA and is in no sense obligated to do any work for the American Security Union."[11] It is clear that if the American Security Union contemplated an adversarial relationship with WPA, Lasser

would appear on management's side of the table. Nothing could more clearly have signaled the end of the organized unemployed movement as a factor in the agency's labor relations process.

Henceforth, any effort to organize the unemployed was confined largely to the most depressed elements of the work force, which typically meant the African American community. Since 1937, for example, the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC), a college-aged offshoot of the militant National Negro Congress, had attempted to organize blacks for resistance to segregation and the exertion of pressure for progressive reform in the South. Organized under Communist leadership, SNYC was always much stronger in Alabama, where the Communist Party had a firmer base. A Georgia chapter was founded in June 1941 under the leadership of African American civil rights advocate Bertha Boozer, a Communist activist who had recently returned from New York to work in the South for voter registration, resistance to the poll tax, and the promotion of local "shop where you can work" efforts. The organization also worked to organize domestic workers and promote cooperation with trade unions in the struggle for economic and social justice. One of the first tasks of SNYC in Atlanta was an attempt to organize the wives of black garbage collection helpers into a Workers Alliance local, an idea that was doomed to failure in light of the unemployed movement's recent collapse.[12]

At the center of these developments was the ubiquitous Hardy Scott, the leading Communist Party activist in Georgia. A scrupulous follower of the party line, Scott had bitterly denounced supporters of England during the period of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. In a bitter diatribe against intervention, he rebuked Atlanta's liberal professor Glenn Rainey with an assertion that there were in America "rising waves of popular protest against the unbearable burdens accumulated from centuries of capitalist oppression and intensified by the present imperialist war." By this time, Scott's rigid adherence to the party line had helped to undermine his position in the Workers Alliance and fatally damaged its standing as a Popular Front organization. His partisan ties were merely confirmed in September 1941, when his anti-imperialism magically morphed into a demand for "victory over fascism in Georgia." The "Organizational Plan for the SNYC," largely the product of Scott's pen, now stressed support for the war effort, the United Service Organizations (USO), and "smoking Hitler out," all of which could be "accomplished here in Atlanta." The document stressed the importance of extending democracy to all people and the realization of equal opportunities "in building a better Georgia."[13] There is no evidence that this commitment held any practical

meaning for the wives of Atlanta's garbage collection helpers, whose status as potential Workers Alliance recruits was dubious at best.

For other Georgia workers, the war boom in the labor market meant that the traditional debate over government employment practices resurfaced in rural areas. Once Georgia planters understood that cotton was considered an essential defense commodity, they resumed their habitual demand that WPA workers be released for agricultural employment. At the center of the controversy in 1941 were African American laborers in Bibb County who protested forced removal from WPA employment to engage in outside construction work. Harman defended Georgia contractors who typically specified a preference for "colored labor for construction jobs," noting employers' contention that "white labor cannot do the work required" and that "it is easier to work colored labor." This problem was especially acute in textile mill areas, where white textile workers "who were not used to hard physical labor" constituted the main labor available. African Americans, meanwhile, charged that "bull pen" hiring practices were even more offensive than forced labor at wages lower than those paid by WPA. The workers also objected to the "double call" system that allowed employers to request two workers for every job available, which often meant that some released project workers invariably found themselves without employment. WPA officials did eventually acknowledge releasing workers because of their refusal to take private or public employment at the prevailing wage. Harman insisted on the wisdom of his policy of immediately releasing persons who left private employment to seek WPA work. Denying discriminatory practices, he told a Macon grand jury that the "WPA is a relief agency only" and that its rule was simple: "take private work when you can get it or get off WPA rolls for good."[14]

So dramatic was the confrontation over alleged discrimination in Bibb County that in an extraordinary step, the AFL decided to recruit African American workers into the Macon Hod Carriers Union. Energized by what he saw as a threat to the prevailing wage, AFL southern representative George Googe attacked state unemployment compensation director J. E. B. Stewart for undermining established wage standards and filed charges against him in Washington for alleged violation of the Hatch Act. Meanwhile, the Hod Carriers urged black workers to refuse work at less than the prevailing rate of 40 cents per hour. The unlikely result was the AFL's success in organizing two thousand African American workers into a segregated union not distinguished by its record in the area of civil rights.[15] This struggle was an extension of Bibb County's unsettled history of employer exploitation of black labor; while the workers were not,

strictly speaking, forced into peonage as had been charged in the past, the downward pressure on local wages for African American workers was consistent with previous practices. Caught in the middle were black workers who preferred the security and standards guaranteed by the federal government and WPA.

Whether in Columbus, Savannah, north Georgia, or Atlanta, the Workers Alliance and other unemployed organizations had receded into the political and economic background by 1941. In most areas, Dalton-Rossville being the exception due to its proximity to the Chattanooga labor market, the Alliance had been marginalized as an advocate for the most vulnerable element in the Georgia labor force. As the voice of the unemployables, the organization had generally become a refuge for the least skilled and most needy African American workers, those who were the last to feel the positive effects of a slowly recovering economy. The work of the Alliance was significant because the group remained the only grassroots organizational entity willing to speak for and defend the interests of Georgia's struggling black workers, especially unskilled laborers and relief recipients. As has been demonstrated, the growth and development of this organization reflected the harsh reality that the best intentions of the black elite aside, there was another increasingly acceptable avenue toward social uplift and economic advance; the once-powerful Workers Alliance, despite its radical image, had offered an alternative means of expression for an oppressed people. Working-class blacks responded to its appeals because of the Alliance's confrontational posture and street-level activity on behalf of the dispossessed, as well as the Communist Party's successful exploitation of the Herndon and Scottsboro cases. Moreover, as Nat Ross later observed, the Workers Alliance had very little competition at its level of activity, and given the resulting leadership vacuum, African Americans simply "had nowhere else to go." In agreement with this analysis, John P. Davis of the National Negro Congress saw the unemployed movement as a critical organizational vehicle for black workers, who "joined unemployed organizations in large numbers." Davis also noted that the other labor organizations that drew significant African American membership in the South were the SCU and the STFU, both agricultural unions that focused on the rural working class and drew leadership from "radical sources."[16]

Although the Workers Alliance was primarily an African American organization in its final year of activity, it had also been a remarkably integrated organization during the period of its greatest influence. Because the Great Depression had damaged employment prospects in a nondiscriminatory way, both whites and blacks were to be found in the

ranks of the Workers Alliance, other unemployed organizations, farmer-labor groups, and even a few labor unions. While the perverse equality of human suffering sometimes brought the dispossessed together across racial lines, the struggle against discrimination was nowhere as prevalent as within the ranks of the Workers Alliance. Hosea Hudson later recalled that while the white rank and file would "go along with it," they preferred to "push it under the rug" rather than openly "stand up and fight for it." At the same time, he argued, the Communists "fought for the question of no discrimination against members." Hudson argued that one of the terrible casualties of the Alliance's decline was the loss of unprecedented unity across racial lines, which had fostered a new measure of class awareness. The Alliance increasingly tried to accommodate itself to white reservations, but after the relief fights of 1938–39, the new layoff provisions of WPA policy caused the organization's support base to contract dramatically, until by 1940, a core group of African Americans was "the last to leave the sinking ship in a state of confusion."[17] The organization's contraction in Georgia matched the national Alliance's marginalization as the nation entered World War II, which ended in its complete disappearance from the stage in 1942. The Alliance's precipitous decline does not, however, detract from the significance of its influence and activity on behalf of the have-nots during its years as exemplar of the Popular Front in action. For Georgia's poor and dispossessed, it had made a difference in the moment of crisis. And with the Alliance's collapse went one of the South's most promising experiments in interracial organization during the New Deal era. The history of the Workers Alliance in Georgia reminds us that vulnerable workers were fully capable of uniting in a class-based movement to demand a better future for the occupants of the bottom rail in a society that had consistently failed to meet their needs.

The Implications of Mass Organization

The moment of mass mobilization was brief, but the unemployed movement's accomplishments within the context of a racially divided and tension-ridden society were remarkable. Against long odds, jobless workers struggled to influence federal policies and improve their lives, which had been shaken by the dramatic failure of the economy in the 1930s. Faced by an unprecedented social and economic crisis, the unemployed banded together to purposefully exploit the new opportunities offered by an increasingly activist federal government, especially when the New Deal's nationalizing impact revolutionized the relationship between the state and national governments. Aided and encouraged by an activist Communist Party, workers and their families rose to make claims on governmental institutions as never before. In the process, working-class people demonstrated initiative and agency long ignored by most historians, whose attentions have often remained focused on the admitted realities of racism and class divisions in southern life.

The experience of Georgia's unemployed provided a prototype for collective action in the future, when the causes of the African American minority and even the poor, both white and black, would draw the attention of the federal government once more. The story of the state's underclass during the Great Depression revealed the potential in grassroots organization for the implementation of needed social changes. Contrary to widely held beliefs, including those of many historians, Georgia workers were fully prepared to employ unions, voluntary associations, and even

the organizations that were the domain of the middle classes, to advance their interests when they were threatened by the economy's collapse. The result was the achievement of a measure of relief that sustained them in their hour of need. Hard times created unprecedented challenges, which in turn produced novel approaches to the solution of daunting social and economic problems. While labor organizations ultimately failed to permanently capture the majority of Georgia's workers and the powerful combination of state and management authority suppressed their organizational efforts, it is undeniable that the workforce proved willing to endorse collective measures, only to taste defeat and disillusionment.

As was true throughout the United States, radical organizations were alive to the organizing opportunity created by the economic system's failure in the troubled 1930s. The growth of jobless protests in Georgia during the early years of the Depression was in part a spontaneous uprising born of human distress, but the protests also reflected the organizational initiatives of Communists, Socialists, unionists, and others who deviated from the political mainstream and economic orthodoxy of the era. Starting with the unemployed protests of the early 1930s, northern-born Communist activists entered the state to assist in the unification of jobless Georgians and to bring greater order to their expressions of outrage at government's failure to meet their needs. And from the outset, the jobless and their leaders employed collective vehicles such as the Unemployed Councils and later the Workers Alliance to promote the agenda of the dispossessed. The result was the early demonstrations that led to the incarceration of unemployed organizer Angelo Herndon and the prosecution of the Atlanta Six defendants under the provisions of the outdated insurrection law. As a consequence of these celebrated cases, the ILD's central role as advocate underscored the Communist involvement in the organization and defense of the poor, even as Georgia's liberal elite groups joined with grassroots activists to form a united front against bigotry and oppression.

The militancy of the unemployed movement was always more evident in Georgia's urban centers, most obviously in the Atlanta area, where the population base was sufficient to present a serious social and economic problem. Because of the urban population concentration, as well as the presence of a large black and white underclass, unemployed activists focused their attention on the DeKalb and Fulton county areas that offered the greatest organizational opportunities. Radical organizers, especially the determined Communists who assumed leadership of the unemployed movement, were determined to mold an urban-rural farmer-labor alliance that might overthrow the capitalist system that beggared

both. Relying on the experience and resources of their very successful Alabama brethren, these revolutionaries intended from the beginning to make the jobless casualties of the Depression economic crisis the core group in a worker coalition that would bring relief in the short run and systemic change over time. It is natural, therefore, that the concrete evidence of their work, including the primary sources that reveal their footprint, is most readily available for Communist organizational activity in the urban center of Atlanta. While this study documents the substantial efforts made by radical organizers in a variety of statewide venues, the heart of the story must be found in militant Communist activism in Atlanta. Radical organizing in the Black Belt, as well as that in smaller urban centers, was often linked to and directed by Atlanta-based activists, as well as district organizers operating out of the Birmingham center of Communist Party District 17. As has been demonstrated, then, the struggle of the organized jobless was a statewide phenomenon. While spontaneous protest occurred in many locations, it is fair to say that the common thread in the fabric of unemployed protest was the presence of radical leadership.

The increasing influence of radicals in the Georgia unemployed movement revealed a change in the character of jobless activism. While Communist leadership played a role in mobilizing the jobless in the pre–New Deal era, many of the early street demonstrations and eviction actions were nonetheless marked by a spontaneity that gradually declined after 1933. This change reflected an element of tension between independent mass action and the more coordinated protests later led by organized entities such as the UTW and the Workers Alliance. The noticeable decline in spontaneous street militancy after 1935, as noted by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, was probably related to the development of the Workers Alliance as an organizational expression of unemployed aspirations. It may be argued that once the Alliance assumed the role of advocate for the jobless on the union model, the interaction between the unemployed and public officials was institutionalized and the organization became a co-opted element in the government's labor relations machinery. While the Alliance may have grown comfortable with its status as union representative, it nonetheless provided a mechanism by which not just white workers, but also previously unorganized African Americans, might interact with the government agencies charged with responsibility for administering the emerging welfare state.

Indeed, the organizational activity of the Depression years actually raised the possibility of a breakthrough in interracial action, as the economic crisis failed to discriminate among the poor on the basis of race.

Consequently, some of the protest demonstrations, meetings, marches, and other activities of the unemployed organizations were carried out on an integrated basis. While the unemployed movement proved willing to explore such interracial cooperation, the challenge thus raised to traditional social practices opened it to criticism from the economic and social elite who controlled Georgia's political and social system in the 1930s. When cross-racial collaboration became a handicap to organizers and protestors, jobless groups often resorted to segregated locals, but they frequently participated in joint actions. These difficulties in maintaining a black-white alliance foreshadowed the problems yet to come when the civil rights movement emerged to challenge Jim Crow in the next generation. The advances of the Depression era were a testament to the power of economic hardship to open new fault lines in the structure of a southern society that was slow to modernize. Despite their modest scope, these halting steps marked a significant line of departure from the past.

While this limited interracial breakthrough was significant, it is equally true that at several points, but especially in the late 1930s, the movement became primarily an African American phenomenon. Due to the racial hierarchy in hiring and employment, it was inevitable that the heaviest burden of unemployment would fall on the black community in both urban and rural areas of the state. By 1939, then, the unemployed movement had become the province of either the black, disabled, or female worker, a group that came to be thought of as the "unemployables." It is a reality that the radical-dominated movement served as the only viable protest mechanism for the poorest of the poor and the most oppressed minority population to make their claims for social provision on an often unsympathetic government bureaucracy.

The challenges thus presented and the new opportunities for interaction with governmental authorities became even more important with the advent of the New Deal and its multiple work relief agencies in 1933. The governmental response to the problem of unemployment highlights the profound impact of the New Deal on the South. With the rise of the social welfare state, workers learned to look to Washington for solutions to their economic plight as never before. In short, the government came to stay in the troubled Depression era. The growth of the work programs of the Roosevelt administration ultimately accelerated the shift from the widespread public acceptance of voluntarism to a more socially oriented sense of community social awareness that rejected unreconstructed individualism. Ever since the 1930s, Georgians, like most Americans, have learned to look to the federal government as guarantor of security and often as employer of last resort. These assumptions are rooted in the

trauma of the Great Depression and were influenced by the new sense of entitlement fostered by the unemployed organizations that spoke for the voiceless in their time of trouble.

The critical new development in the thinking and behavior of the Georgia jobless was their unprecedented willingness to combine their voices to speak to authority. As the poor, homeless, and unemployed contemplated their fate, they arrived at the conclusion that collective instruments were required for them to press their demands on the federal and state governments. Consequently, the jobless joined in the creation of the Unemployed Councils and the Workers Alliance as organizations through which they might deal with an unresponsive welfare system and force concessions from a rapidly growing federal bureaucracy, including the PWA, CWA, and WPA administrators they faced. Their organizational thrust sometimes forced concessions from reluctant administrators, as was true with regard to the reduction of regional wage disparities that disadvantaged residents of the South. Most importantly, this willingness to organize gave the lie to the mistaken assumption that southern workers were somehow impervious to the modern trend toward collectivism; the Depression crisis taught the unemployed to combine to speak with one voice; and the result was an increase in governmental responsiveness under pressure from below.

The apex of collective action was reached in the mid-1930s, first with the dramatic but failed attempt at an industry-wide textile strike in 1934, a breakthrough event that legions of Georgia workers hoped would bring them into the family of organized labor. While the dream ended badly and the legacy was bitterness that has still not faded, this massive movement showed that many of the most overworked and underpaid operatives in a highly competitive industry aspired to join the ranks of the already organized craft workers who were the heart of the existing Georgia labor movement. The available evidence clearly indicates that Georgia's textile workers were open to union organization that, for most, never came. The long-term outcome does not diminish the significance of the widespread outpouring of unionist sentiment witnessed during the textile workers rebellion, now largely forgotten by descendants of the worker community that once flocked to the union banner. It is entirely reasonable to conclude that the uprising of 1934 was a moment of possibility rather than a demonstration of worker resistance to change.

While the great textile strike raised worker consciousness of the union gospel, it was the Workers Alliance of America that embodied the hopes of Georgia's army of the unemployed. The Alliance, more than any other organizational entity, was the central feature of the effort at mass

mobilization among the state's poor and unorganized during the Depression crisis. The Workers Alliance also provided the most vivid example of the Georgia Popular Front in action. Composed of Communists, Socialists, liberals, and their assorted supporters, this organization brought the antifascist Alliance of the period to life, while offering all of Georgia's jobless workers one big union that could serve as their ombudsman in dealing with the New Deal bureaucrats and their local minions. Led by a Socialist president and a Communist secretary on the national scene, the Alliance became a powerful voice for the nation's poor. And in Georgia and Alabama, the Workers Alliance, effectively led by Communists and supported by Popular Fronters, became the key organizational advocate for workers without hope, particularly though not exclusively those in the African American community.

In the state of Georgia, the organization was often plagued by internal conflict as the various constituent groups vied for leadership in a struggle that increasingly brought Communists to key positions of responsibility. By 1939, the Communists had clearly emerged as the dominant group in the affairs of an organization that increasingly fought a rear guard action against the negative publicity heaped upon both the national and local Workers Alliance. An avalanche of local Red-baiting and a wave of unfavorable coverage at the time of the HUAC hearings were critical factors in the isolation and decline of the Workers Alliance after 1939. For a time, however, mainstream liberals and middle-class organizations such as the NAACP and the Urban League reluctantly cooperated with the Georgia Workers Alliance in advancing the goals of the poor and dispossessed. For truth be told, the Alliance's popularity with the poor and downtrodden revealed a capability for mobilization far beyond that of the state's elite organizations, which were fully aware of the challenge it raised to their own leadership. Until the organization foundered on the rocks of negative national publicity, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and internal bickering, not to mention the impact of economic recovery, the Workers Alliance was an influential voice for the jobless in a state hard hit by the employment crisis of the 1930s. And even in 1939 and 1940, its surviving locals remained virtually the only organization that spoke for what had become a black constituency in some of the most hard-hit areas of the state, in places where discrimination reigned supreme. The activities of the Georgia Workers Alliance, in short, represented the peak of collective action and worker influence on behalf of the unemployed in an essentially hostile environment; a militant organization, the Alliance offered a path to the future and presaged a new collective consciousness that was to reemerge, at least within the black community, during the modern

civil rights struggle. In its time, the unemployed movement contradicted the longstanding argument that Georgia workers, including those in the minority community, could not or would not organize; under the right circumstances and with sufficient provocation, collective action was, in fact, viewed by African American Alliance supporters as the hope of an oppressed people.

Following the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 and even more after the entry of the United States into World War II in 1941, the state's economic future improved dramatically. As was true throughout the South, employment prospects brightened for Georgia workers, though African Americans still did not enjoy full access to the new positions available. Yet in coastal Georgia, shipbuilding expanded rapidly, as did job opportunity; and here, wartime pressures eventually led to union organization that raised living standards for all elements in the workforce, including African Americans at the bottom of the economic ladder. In Savannah and Brunswick, for example, thousands of workers joined the union family as a result of wartime labor policies that fostered union organization. Similarly, at Bell Aircraft in Marietta, defense industry employment opened opportunity to new workers, including both women and African Americans now able to participate in organizational activity on an unprecedented scale. Although access to skilled occupations remained restricted, these workers nonetheless enjoyed federally fixed wage levels never achieved in the prewar era. Still another significant outcome of wartime opportunity and the relentless mechanization of farming was the acceleration of a wartime population movement from rural to urban areas. The urbanization and industrialization of the state, while gradual, inaugurated a long-term trend in the direction of higher wages and expanded prosperity that prevails in our own time.

Against this background of modernization, it is fair to say that the organizational initiatives of the 1930s helped pave the way for some of the more dramatic advances experienced by Georgia citizens under the pressure of wartime mobilization. The union activity and unemployed organizing of the Depression era exposed Georgia workers to collective principles that some would continue to endorse during the war. Equally significant was the organizing experience provided by the unemployed movement, a collective endeavor that was to influence the irrepressible long-term trend toward civil rights activism and greater black political participation after the war. Although political and social progress came very slowly in Georgia, the Popular Front struggle on behalf of the dispossessed advanced a model of organizational pressure that before long was to bear fruit in the battle for civil rights. Although most white Georgians

were slow to accept the changes that followed World War II, African Americans trained in the school of organizational activism maintained the pressure that eventually led to the revolution of the 1960s. While the mass jobless organizations of 1930s Georgia were eventually vanquished by adherence to Jim Crow, the heavy hand of state authority, the power of capital, and the specter of radicalism, the history of the state's unemployed movement demonstrates that worker organization was, at least for a time, embraced by the impoverished masses as a sensible response to economic adversity. And while the uneasy cross-racial coalition building of the 1930s slipped into memory, the civil rights movement was to witness another effort to build an alliance between black activists and white liberals on behalf of the liberation movement and legislative advances of the 1960s. The story of Georgia's unemployed activism in the 1930s confirms the barely visible emergence of an alternative New South, in which disinherited African Americans endorsed social and political agitation as an approach to intolerable conditions: their voices were to echo in the achievements of the subsequent generation. These advances were built upon the courageous actions of their predecessors, whether Populists, Garveyites, or the rank-and-file supporters of the Depression-era unemployed organizations, all of whom possessed the moral strength to challenge the accepted wisdom of their day by crafting a peoples' movement dedicated to changing the social rules and political realities of their respective eras.

This page intentionally left blank

Notes

Introduction

1. Karen Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Georgina Hickey, *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890–1940* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003); Randall L. Patton, with David B. Parker, *Carpet Capital: The Rise of a New South Industry* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); Douglas Flamming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884–1984* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Michelle Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness: Race, Workers, and Culture in the Modern South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Clifford M. Kuhn, *Contesting the New South Order: The 1914–1915 Strike at Atlanta's Fulton Mills* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008); Charles H. Martin, *The Angelo Herndon Case and Southern Justice* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).

2. Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

3. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 20–22, 155–56.

4. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 199. For further discussion of African American strategies for survival and tactics for resistance, such as informal neighborhood support networks, intracommunity institutions, and open protest, see Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and*

Labors after the Civil War (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 62–63, 85–88, 120–24, 130–34, 214–15.

5. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward have offered a comprehensive definition of the social protest movement that places the organizational activity of the Depression-era unemployed squarely in the category of "movement." Piven and Cloward's critics also acknowledge that these activities merited movement status. See Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 3–5; see also Steve Valocci, "The Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1930s: A Re-examination of the Piven and Cloward Thesis," *Social Problems* 37 (May 1990), 191–92, 202–3.

6. Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917–1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 113; Fraser M. Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 36. For a provocative analysis of Communist activism in the South during the 1920s and 1930s, see Gilmore, esp. chaps. 2 and 3.

7. Michael S. Holmes, *The New Deal in Georgia: An Administrative History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), 318; see also Ferguson, 962. Hickey emphasizes the limitations of New Deal gains in Georgia, 214–15.

8. For discussion of the shift to "worker statism" in a representative northern city, see Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 271–83; for a Georgia focus, see also Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 319–20; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 215.

9. Ferguson, 162.

10. Interview, Hosea Hudson, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library, Southern Oral History Collection, Folder 4007; see also Ferguson, 162; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 196–97.

11. For discussion of the theme of southern liberalism, see John Egerton, *Speak Now against the Day: The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Anthony Dunbar, *Against the Grain: Southern Radicals and Prophets, 1929–1959* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981); Frank T. Adams with Myles Horton, *Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 1975), and Adams, *James A. Dombrowski: An American Heretic, 1897–1983* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); John A. Salmond, *A Southern Rebel: The Life and Times of Aubrey Willis Williams, 1890–1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), and *Miss Lucy of the CIO: The Life and Times of Lucy Randolph Mason, 1882–1959* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988); C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966); Robert H. Craig, *Religion and Radical Politics: An Alternative Christian Tradition in the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Eliot Wiggenton, *Refuse to Stand Idly By: An*

Oral History of Grass Roots Social Activism in America, 1921–1964 (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Linda Reed, *Simple Decency and Common Sense: The Southern Conference Movement, 1938–1963* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Thomas A. Krueger, *And Promises to Keep: The Southern Conference for Human Welfare, 1938–1948* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967).

Chapter 1. Economic Crisis as Opportunity

1. Numan V. Bartley, *The Creation of Modern Georgia*, 2nd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 172; Caldwell quoted in John C. Inscoe, "'All Manner of Defeated, Shiftless, Shifty, Pathetic, and Interesting Good People': Autobiographical Encounters with Southern Poverty," in Richard Godden and Martin Crawford," eds., *Reading Southern Poverty between the Wars, 1918–1939*" (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 152; see also David R. Goldfield, "The Urban South: A Regional Framework," *American Historical Review* 86 (Dec. 1981): 1030; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia,* 9, 11–12; Paul E. Mertz, *New Deal Policy and Southern Rural Poverty* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 10–12; Roger Biles, *The South and the New Deal* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), chap. 2, esp. 18.

2. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 9–10; U.S. President's Committee on Economic Security, "Social Security in America," 1935, pt. 1, chap. 3; U.S. Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Unemployment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931), 1:258; Biles, 19; Douglas L. Smith, *The New Deal in the Urban South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 19–20; quotation from Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlan E Joye, and E. Bernard West, *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City: 1914–1948* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 202.

3. Interviews, Nannie Leah Washburn and Augusta Dunbar, Living Atlanta Collection, Atlanta, Atlanta History Center, Boxes 39 and 36; other quotes from Kuhn, Joye, and West, 198–99; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 192; Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 20; Angelo Herndon, *You Cannot Kill the Working Class* (New York: International Labor Defense and League of Struggle for Negro Rights, ca. 1934); Communist Party U.S.A. Collection (Reference Center for Marxist Studies), now in Tamiment Institute, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library.

4. Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection; E. T. Lewis quoted in Kuhn, Joye, and West, 200; Ferguson, 47–48; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 193–94.

5. The best coverage of southern unemployed activism may be found in Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, which devotes substantial attention to both the Unemployed Councils and the Workers Alliance of America. While Texas must be considered more southwestern than southern, Julie Kirk Blackwelder, *Women of the Depression: Caste and Culture in San Antonio, 1929–1939* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1984) provides useful information about unemployed

organizing in San Antonio. The Georgia experience is dealt with in Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*; Ferguson, chap. 2; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 94–97; John Hammond Moore, "Communists and Fascists in a Southern City: Atlanta, 1930," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 67 (Summer 1968) 437–454; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, chap. 7; Mark Solomon, *Red and Black: Communism and Afro-Americans, 1929–1935* (New York: Garland, 1988), 410, 419–22. A useful first-hand account of the party's efforts in the South during the Great Depression may be found in James S. Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South: A Communist's Memoir* (Minneapolis: MEP, 2001); see also Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: The Life and Times of a Black Radical* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994) and Tom Johnson, *The Reds in Dixie: Who Are the Communists and What Do They Stand For in the South* (New York: CPUSA, ca. 1935), located in Reference Center for Marxist Studies, in Tamiment Institute Library.

6. For discussion of the early stages of the national unemployed movement, see Roy Rosenzweig, "Organizing the Unemployed: The Early Years of the Great Depression, 1929–1933," *Radical America* 10 (July–August 1976), 37–61. Daniel J. Leab, "United We Eat: The Creation and the Organization of the Unemployed Councils in 1930," *Labor History* 8 (Fall 1967), 300–315, explores the first response to the nation's economic downturn in 1930, with emphasis on the first hunger march of March 1930. See also Piven and Cloward, 57–59, 68–76; Albert Prago, "The Organization of the Unemployed and the Role of the Radicals, 1929–1935," Ph.D. diss., Union Graduate School, 1976; James J. Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed: Community and Union Activists in the Industrial Heartland* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), chap. 2. Franklin Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor: The Story of Collective Action of the Unemployed, 1808–1942* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1991), offers a radical view of the collective actions of the jobless in historical perspective; see especially chap. 25.

7. Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 15–17, 209–10.

8. Quoted in Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 17.

9. Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 192; Brattain, 48; N. B. Murphy to POUR, Sept. 19, 1931; G. H. Hargret to POUR, Sept. 27, 1931; T. G. Woolford to Walter S. Gifford, Oct., 16, 1931, Office Files of Fred Croxton, Frederick Croxton Papers, National Archives, Record Group 73, POUR Files, West Branch, Iowa, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, Series 7; see full file for evidence of the cautious responses of Georgia public officials and charity organizations. Biles accurately describes POUR as "well-intentioned" but "ineffectual." Biles, 33.

10. Ottanelli, 28–29; Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 50; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 148–49; Folsom, 264–65; Piven and Cloward, 68–69, Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 18–19; Leab, "United We Eat"; Rosenzweig, "Organizing the Unemployed."

11. John Di Santo (National Field Organizer),"Report of My Southern Tour, Sept. 11–Oct. 15," Russian State Archive of Social and Political History [here-

after RGASPI], Fond 515, Opis 1, Delo 1292 ([hereafter *fond* and *opis* are identical; files will be referred to by relevant delo], Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Reel 97; Prago, 112–13; Paul Crouch, "Report on the Communist Movement in North and South Carolina," Paul Crouch Papers, Stanford, Calif., Stanford University, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace Archives, Box 1; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*,13; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 80–81; Ottanelli, 40; Klehr, 324–25.

12. Di Santo, "Report of Activities, Southern Tour," Nov. 22, 1928, RGASPI, Delo 1292, Reel 97; Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection; see also Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 209. Despite Di Santo's suggestion, the party chose to locate Southeastern District No. 17 in Birmingham, a city on the edge of the Black Belt in which organizational prospects were much brighter. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 14.

13. Di Santo, "Report of Activities, Southern Tour"; Will Alexander to Rev. F. F. Reese, June 22, 1932, Arthur Franklin Raper Papers, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library Special Collections, Southern Historical Collection, Folder 3966. Despite the substantial progress reported by Di Santo, the party's greatest successes in the early 1930s were to occur not in Georgia but rather in neighboring Alabama, where an active local leadership began to develop. Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 112–14; Ottanelli, 39–40; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, esp. chaps. 1–3.

14. James S. Allen, "Communism in the South: The Opening, 1930–31," James S. Allen Papers, New York, New York University, Tamiment Institute, Elmer Bobst Library, Box 3; Charles H. Martin, "The International Labor Defense and Black America," *Labor History* 26 (Spring 1985): 170; for discussion of labor's initiatives in the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill strike, see Gary Fink, *The Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill Strike of 1914–1915: Espionage, Labor Conflict, and New South Industrial Relations* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1993) and Clifford Kuhn, *Contesting the New South Order: The 1914–1915 Strike at Atlanta's Fulton Mills* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), esp. 112–13, 147–48, 222, 228, 230–31. Precedents for renewed African American activism in the 1930s are the subject of Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920–1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom;* and Mark V. Wetherington, "The Savannah Negro Laborers' Strike of 1891," in *Southern Workers and Their Unions, 1880–1975: Selected Papers, Second Southern Labor History Conference, 1978*, ed. Merl E. Reed, Leslie S. Hough, and Gary M. Fink (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 3–22.

15. "Report on Southern District, TUUL," Feb. 12, 1930, RGASPI, Delo 2176, Reel 163; Ferguson, 54–55; John W. Crawford to T. Arnold Hill, March 4, 1930, National Urban League Papers [hereafter NUL Papers], Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Series 4, Box 27; Alexander to Reese, June 22, 1932, Raper Papers, Folder 3966; U.S. Congress, House Special Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States, *Investigation of*

Communist Propaganda, 71st Cong., 2nd sess., pt. 6, vol. 1, 208, 219, 221–22; see also Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 193; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 125–26; Charles H. Martin, "International Labor Defense," 171; *Liberator*, Jan. 11, 1930. Albert Prago maintains that although the southern urban party units, including Atlanta's, were small, they were of "some significance." Prago, 111.

16. "Minutes of Buro Meeting of Greenville, S.C.," March 23, 1930; "Report on Southern District, TUUL," Feb. 19, 1930, RGASPI, Delos 2149, 2174, Reel 163; Tom Johnson to John Williamson, May 31, 1930, RGASPI, Delo 1996, Reel 154; Alexander to Reese, June 22, 1932, Raper Papers, Folder 3966.

17. Walter Wilson, "The Atlanta Cases," n.d., ca. 1930, American Civil Liberties Union Papers (microfilm edition) [hereafter ACLU Papers], Princeton, N.J., Princeton University, Seeley Mudd Library, Reel 77; "Report on the Southern District, TUUL," Feb. 19, 1930; "Death Penalty Demanded," 1930, RGASPI, Delo 2212, Reel 165; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 126–27.

Chapter 2. The Employment Crisis as Catalyst

1. House Special Committee, *Investigation of Communist Propaganda*, 211, 239; "Death Penalty Demanded," 1930; Wilson, "Atlanta Cases"; "Six Radicals Face Death in Georgia," June 1930, all in ACLU Papers, 1930, Reel 77; "Details of the Powers-Carr Case," n.d., National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers (microfilm edition) [hereafter NAACP Papers], Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Reel 9; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 26; *Labor Defender*, June and August, 1930; Folsom, 266; for full discussion of the insurrection law and its tortured history, see Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 19–20.

2. "Death Penalty Demanded"; House Special Committee, *Investigation of Communist Propaganda*, 218; Klehr, 333; "Death Penalty: The Case of Georgia against Negro and White Workers," ACLU Papers, 1930, Reel 77; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 19–20; Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 19.

3. Wilson, "Atlanta Cases"; "Charges, Joe Carr and M. H. Powers," March 9, 1930, copy in NAACP Papers, Reel 9; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 126; "Six Radicals Face Death in Georgia"; "Death Penalty Demanded."

4. Tom Johnson, "May Day Demonstrations in South," July 10, 1930; Johnson to Secretariat, Central Committee, April 12, 1930, both in RGASPI, Delos 1960 and 2150, Reels 151 and 162; Young Communist League, Atlanta Unit, "Dear Fellow Worker," ca. April 1930, Glenn Rainey Papers, Atlanta, Emory University Special Collections, Box 12. Though local memories of rural political activism had been eclipsed by New South boosterism between 1900 and 1930, the Rome area had once been a center for farm-based Populist sentiment. See Brattain, chap. 1, esp. 26–27.

5. Wilson, "Atlanta Cases"; John Dos Passos to Theodore Dreiser, Oct. 6, 1930, and Dreiser, "The Trial of the Negro Communists," both in Theodore

Dreiser Papers, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 34; *Negro Liberator*, June 7, 1930; Henry Story, "Note," n.d., M. H. Powers File, Reference Center for Marxist Studies, in Tamiment Institute Library, Collection 132.02, Box 6; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 22; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 126; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 195; Ferguson, 54; Folsom, 266; Smith, 41–42; Gilmore, 114–16. For biographical sketches of the "Atlanta Six," see *New Masses*, March–May, 1931; see also "Atlanta Six," *Labor Defender*, Aug. 1930.

6. Johnson to Max Bedacht, May 24 and 25, 1930, RGASPI, Delo 1960, Reel 151; Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection.

7. "Form Tenants Leagues—Demand the Right to Live," ca. Aug. 1930; Johnson to John Williamson, July 22 and Aug. 30, 1930, RGASPI, Delos 2151 and 1996, Reels 162 and 154; Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection.

8. Johnson to Max Bedacht, May 24 and 25, 1930, RGASPI, Delo 1960, Reel 151.

9. Johnson to Secretariat, Central Committee, Aug. 23, 1930, RGASPI, Delo 1960, Reel 151; Wilson, "Atlanta Cases"; Forrest Bailey to Walter White, Sept. 19, 1930; Sylvia Pennington to White, June 7 and 24, 1930; Will Alexander to White, June 27 and Sept. 19 and 30, 1930; Walter Wilson to ACLU, n.d., all in NAACP Papers, Reel 9. For evidence of Alexander's anticommunist sentiments and actions, see Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 155–56; on Nance's background and nuanced racial views, see Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 43. The ILD's growing involvement in organization among southern blacks is discussed in Charles H. Martin, "International Labor Defense," 171.

10. By the end of 1931, widespread unemployment had forced most Georgia unions to adopt defensive tactics to maintain membership levels. Smith, 30–31; "To the Officers and Delegates, Thirty Second Annual Convention, Georgia Federation of Labor," April 18, 1930, and George Googe to William Green, April 29, 1930, both in American Federation of Labor Papers [hereafter AFL Papers], William Green Collection, Silver Spring, Md., George Meany Memorial Archives, Box 9; *Labor Banner*, May 24, 1930, and "Statistics on the AFL and the Southern Organizing Campaign," 1930, both in Katherine Pollack Ellickson Papers, Detroit, Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs (hereafter ALUA), Boxes 12 and 22. For discussion of the AFL's longstanding effort to move into the South, see Kuhn, 1, 2, 99–102, 195–99.

11. International Labor Defense, Press Release, June 21, 1930, ACLU Papers, 1930, Reel 77; House Special Committee, *Investigation of Communist Propaganda*, 240–45; *Southern Worker*, Aug. 16, 1930; *Labor Defender*, July 7, 1930, Wilson, "Atlanta Cases."

12. Walter Wilson, *Federated Press*, ca. June 1930, Mary Barker Papers, Atlanta, Emory University Special Collections, Box 9; Wilson, "Atlanta's Communists," *Nation*, 133 (June 25, 1930); *Southern Worker*, Aug. 16, 1930. Barker's

liberalism is discussed in Joseph W. Newman, "Mary C. Barker and the Atlanta Teachers' Union," in Reed, Hough, and Fink, 69–70.

13. *Labor Review*, n.d., ca. June 1930 and June 6, 1930, Barker Papers, Box 9.

14. W. B. Spoffard to Charles N. Lathrop, Oct. 2, 1930, and "Information on the Situation in Atlanta, Georgia," Oct. 2, 1930, both in ACLU Papers, 1930, Reel 77; Harry F. Ward to Barker, Aug. 21, 1930, and "Statement Prepared by the Citizens of Atlanta," n.d., ca. June 1930, both in Barker Papers, Box 9; Harry T. Ward, Roger Baldwin, and Forrest Bailey to Rainey, n.d., Rainey Papers, Box 12; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 23–24.

15. Millis to Frank J. Manning, Feb. 18, 1930, Mary Raoul Millis Papers (Raoul Family Papers), Atlanta, Emory University Special Collections, Box 17. The contraction and isolation of the Atlanta Socialist Party is mentioned in Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 73.

16. Millis to Manning, Feb. 18, 1930.

17. Clarence Senior to Millis, March 20, 1930, Raoul Family Papers, Box 17.

18. *Southern Worker*, Sept. 20 and Oct. 25, 1930; for discussion of the status of the Atlanta Six, see Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 24–25; Gilmore, 162–63.

19. Arthur F. Raper, "The Status of Negro Brick Layers, Carpenters, Painters, and Plasterers in Jacksonville, Florida and Macon and Augusta, Georgia," March 1930, Raper Papers, Folder 3966; "A Digest of the Activities of the Atlanta Urban League for 1930," 1930, NUL Papers, Series 5, Box 8.

20. "Depression and the Race Problem (A Confidential Statement)," 1930, Commission on Interracial Cooperation Papers [hereafter CIC Papers], Atlanta, Atlanta University Center Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Box 4.

21. Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection; Arthur Raper Interview, Atlanta, Atlanta History Center, Living Atlanta Collection; Rainey quoted in Kuhn, Joye, and West, 204; Charles H. Martin, "White Supremacy and Black Workers: Georgia's 'Black Shirts' Combat the Great Depression," *Labor History* 18 (Summer 1977), esp. 368–73; Ferguson, 48; Moore, 98–99; Biles, 109; Neighborhood Union, "News Bulletin," No. 1, Oct. 1, 1930, Neighborhood Union Papers, Atlanta, Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Box 10.

22. Interview, Nellie Bryant, Atlanta, Atlanta History Center, Living Atlanta Collection, Box 35; Charles H. Martin, "White Supremacy and Black Workers," 374–75; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 193–94; Ferguson, 48. For evidence of official obstructionism and legal harassment directed at the Black Shirts, see *Atlanta Journal*, Sept. 30, 1930; *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 7, 1930; "Order of Fascisti Refused Charter," Oct. 17, 1930, Raper Papers, Folder 3966.

23. Edwin Tribble, "Blackshirts in Georgia," *New Republic*, Oct. 8, 1930, 205; "Report, Executive Secretary to Annual Meeting of Georgia Committee on Interracial Cooperation," Jan. 14, 1931, Neighborhood Union Papers, Box 12; Baker and Raper quoted in Kuhn, Joye, and West, 205. For an assessment of

the outcome, including the potential for a revival of racial conflict based on a competitive labor market, see Charles H. Martin, "White Supremacy and Black Workers," 381; Moore, 453–54; Ferguson, 48.

24. House Special Committee, *Investigation of Communist Propaganda*, 224, 242; CIC, "Depression and the Race Problem," CIC Papers; *Labor Defender*, n.d., ca. Nov. 1930, Mark Solomon/Robert Kaufman Papers, New York, New York University, Tamiment Institute, Elmer Bobst Library, Box 3; *Southern Worker*, Oct. 25, 1930.

25. *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Dec. 5 and 10, 1931; *Southern Worker*, Aug. 16 and Dec. 30, 1930.

26. *Augusta Labor Review*, Jan. 30, 1931, ACLU Papers, 1931, Reel 81; Hosea Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep South: A Personal Record* (New York: International, 1972), 118; *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, April 6, 1931; Green to Edward J. Henning, April 3, 1931; Green to Charles W. Anderson, Feb. 17, 1931; "Green Fights Employment Insurance," n.d., all in William Green Papers, Meany Archives, Box 6.

27. *Southern Worker*, Feb. 7 and 21, 1931; "Don't Starve in the Midst of Plenty," ca. Feb. 1931; "Economic and Political Situation in the South: Tasks of the Party," ca. 1931; Minutes, District 17 Buro, Jan. 1, 1931, all in RGASPI, Delos 2520, 2521, and 2566, Reels 190, 193; *The Unemployed*, Jan. 24, 1931, Allen Papers, Box 4.

28. Mrs. John Hope to Frank Miller, Aug. 27, 1931; "How the Union Handled the Unemployment Crisis of 1931–1932," 1932; "Partial Report of the West Side Unemployment Committee of the Neighborhood Union," 1931; Chairman, Relief Committee, "Report"; Mrs. L. D. Shively, "Report of the Emergency Committee of the Neighborhood Union," 1931–32; Hope to Raper, Aug. 13, 1931, Neighborhood Union Papers, Boxes 3, 6, and 9; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 203–6; Ferguson, 52–55. Ferguson provides a full account of the Neighborhood Union's work to ameliorate the worst effects of the unemployment crisis on the Atlanta African American community's west-side neighborhood.

29. National Urban League, Annual Report, 1931; "Report of the Major Activities of the Atlanta Urban League for 1931," 1931; "A Digest of the Activities of the Atlanta Urban League for 1930," 1930, NUL Papers, Series 5, Box 8; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 204.

30. Thad Holt to E. P. Hayes (telegram), Feb. 1, 1931; Holt, "Memorandum," Feb. 8, 1931; Holt to Hayes, Nov. 19, 1931; R. W. Woodruff to Gifford, Nov. 17, 1931; Alice E. Stenholm, "Report on Georgia Field Trip," Oct. 13–14, 1931, all in PECE/POUR Files, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, NA, RG 73, Series 10, Georgia; Robert W. Woodruff, "Confidential" Memorandum, Robert W. Woodruff Papers, Atlanta, Emory University Special Collections, Box 282.

31. "Dear Dr. Christie," Nov. 1, 1931, *U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the U. S., 1917–1941* (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1984), Reel 28; Frank Miller to Woodruff, Jan. 9, 1932, Woodruff Papers, Box 282.

32. "Minutes of Section Meeting, Atlanta," Jan. 1, 1933, RGASPI, Delo 2925, Reel 225.

33. Johnson to Earl Browder, April 9, 1931; RGASPI, Delo 2285, Reel 173.

34. Howard A. Kester, "The Interracial Situation," Oct. 1931, RGASPI, Delo 2339, Reel 178; Jessie Daniel Ames to Friend, Dec. 21, 1931, Neighborhood Union Papers, Box 10; Charles H. Martin, "International Labor Defense," 170; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 16–17.

35. "Draft Four Month Plan of Work of the Negro Department of the CC as Adopted by Negro Department," Oct.–Feb. 1932, and "Directives to the Districts on Negro Work in Connection with the National Hunger March," ca. Oct. 1931, both in RGASPI, Delo 2339, Reel 178.

36. Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection; Herndon to Browder, June 5, 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2927, Reel 225; "Add Herndon xxx Party," International Labor Defense Papers (hereafter ILD Papers) (Microfilm), New York, New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Reel 18; see also Herndon, *Let Me Live*, reprint, 1937 (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 174–75; Elizabeth Lawson, *20 Years on the Chain Gangs* (New York: International Labor Defense, 1935), 5, Reference Center for Marxist Studies, in Tamiment Institute Library, Angelo Herndon File, Collection 132.02, Box 4.

37. Herndon, *Let Me Live*, 174, 176; Ferguson, 55; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 195; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 3; Prago, 112–13.

38. Folsom, 328; "Workers of Atlanta! Employed and Unemployed—Negro and White—Attention! Men and Women of Atlanta," June 1932, in Herndon, *Let Me Live*, 336; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 4–5; Prago, 48; *Atlanta Constitution*, June 19 and 20, 1932; *Labor Challenge*, Sept. 23, 1935, in ILD Papers, Reel 18.

39. Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection; Herndon, *Let Me Live*, 191; Kuhn, Joye, and West, 202–3; Herndon, "Winning Relief Was My Crime," *Labor Challenge*, Sept. 23, 1935, ILD Papers, Reel 18; "Hungry Atlantans Demand Food in County Board Visit," June 29, 1932, Jane Van de Vrede Papers, Clayton, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Box 5; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 5–6; Ferguson, 55; Prago, 148.

40. *Atlanta Daily World*, July 23, 1932; Herndon, *Let Me Live*, 190; Ferguson, 55; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 195; Kuhn, Joye, and West, 203; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 6; Folsom, 328; Hudson, *Black Worker*, 118.

41. "Workers of Atlanta," ca. July 1932, Clarina Michelson Papers, New York, New York University, Tamiment Institute Library, Elmer Bobst Library, Box 1; Joan Barbour to National Election Board, July 4, 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2928, Reel 225. For evidence of a rudimentary Communist political organization in Atlanta, see "Organizations in Atlanta, Georgia," July 1, 1932, and "Contacts—Atlanta. Georgia," ca. Sept. 1932, both in Michelson Papers, Box 1.

42. Barbour to Don Burke (ILD) and Nat Ross, July 13, 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2928, Reel 225; Barbour to Editor, *Daily Worker*, July 21, 1932, and *Washington Tribune*, Aug. 5, 1932, ILD Papers, Reels 16, 18; *Atlanta Daily World*, Aug.

15, 1932; Cooper to Mr. Harais, ca. July 1932, and "Copy of Indictment of Angelo Herndon," July 16, 1932, both in Barker Papers, Box 9; Washburn quoted in Kuhn, Joye, and West, 207; Hudson, *Black Worker*, 118–19; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 7–8; Smith, 42.

43. Harry (Jackson?) to Comrades, ca. July 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2929, Reel 226; Hosea Hudson, "A Black Worker in the Deep South" (notebook), n.d., New York, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Hosea Hudson Papers, Box 3; see also "Minutes of Ford and Foster Club," 1932, CIC Papers, Reel 7; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 196; Charles H. Martin, " International Labor Defense," 175.

44. Michelson to Secretariat, Aug. 19, 1932, Michelson Papers, Box 1; To National Office, ILD, Don Burke, and Nat Ross, July 13, 1932, and Otto Hall to Browder, July 21, 1932, both in RGASPI, Delo 2928, Reel 225. Some elements within ILD recognized the organization's failure to grasp the broad significance of the Herndon case. Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 11.

45. Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 174; "Resolution," July, 1932, Barker Papers, Box 9; Barbour to Earl Hacker (ILD), July 26, 1932, Michelson Papers, Box 1; Helen Smith to Hacker, July 16 and Aug. 3, 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2928, Reel 225.

46. Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 46–7; Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection; Bacote quoted in Kuhn, Joye, and West, 205–6; "Support the Unemployed Workers in Their Struggle for Bread," n.d., Michelson Papers, Box 1; "Workers of Atlanta," ca. 1932; Ross, "Report to the Secretariat," Aug. 3, 1932; District Committee Minutes, Aug. 7, 1932, RGASPI, Delos 3003, 2925, and 2930, Reels 232 and 225.

47. *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept. 22, 1932; "CP Candidates, State of Georgia"; "State of Georgia, Election Laws—Filing Candidates, Etc."; Barbour to Clarence Hathaway, July 19, 1932; Barbour to National Election Committee, July 4, 1932, all in Michelson Papers, Box 1. Of the party's sixteen-member state election committee, all but three represented Atlanta. "CP State Election Campaign Committee," July 24, 1932, Michelson Papers, Box 1; for the Ford-Foster Committee's perception of the Herndon case and unemployment as campaign issues, see "Minutes of Ford and Foster Club," 1932, CIC Papers, Reel 7.

48. Ross, "Report to Secretariat, Central Committee," Nov. 19 and Dec. 9, 1932; Benjamin J. Davis Jr. to William L. Patterson, Oct. 20, 1932, all in RGASPI, Delo 2929, Reel 226.

49. Ross to Secretariat, Central Committee, Nov. 19 and Dec. 9, 1932; Davis to Patterson, Oct. 20, 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2929, Reel 226. For discussion of Hall's longstanding Communist Party ties, see Gilmore, 67–70, 83–84, 87, 88, 89, 163.

50. *New York Times*, n.d., quoted in Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 226; Ross to Secretariat, Central Committee, Sept. 2, Oct. 22, and Nov. 19, 1932; Ross to Dear Friend, Nov. 12, 1932; "On to Washington," n.d., RGASPI, Delos 2929, 3011, Reels 226, 233. For discussion of the second national hunger march and

its outcome, see Klehr, 65–68; Folsom, 332–38; Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 44–45.

51. "The Unemployed in Atlanta," n.d., NUL Papers, Southern Regional Office Files, Box A-35.

52. See Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, for a comprehensive treatment of the lengthy and sometimes complicated legal process and publicity campaign that eventually resulted in Herndon's release. The case is also covered in Gilmore, 161–66, 173–74; Folsom, 327–29; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 219–21, 248–49, 297–98; Klehr, 333; Ferguson, 54–55, 57; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 195–96; and Kuhn, Joye, and West, 202–3.

53. *Atlanta Daily World*, Jan. 23; July 7, 10, 12, 21, 1933; *Macon Telegraph*, Jan. 30, 1933; *Daily Worker*, Jan. 27, 1933; *Time*, Jan. 30, 1933; "But There Will Come Thousands of Angelo Herndons," March 1933, Solomon/Kaufman Papers, Box 2. For a full examination of press reaction to the verdict and its significance, see Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 64–67.

54. *Daily Worker*, Jan. 30 and Feb. 3, 1933; *Atlanta Daily World*, Jan. 29 and 30, 1933; *Macon Telegraph*, Jan. 30, 1933; all in ILD Papers, Reel 16; Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection; Interview, C. Vann Woodward, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library, Southern Oral History Collection A-341; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 75–78; Gilmore, 173–74. See also *"Wisdom, Justice and Moderation": The Case of Augelo Herndon* (New York: Joint Committee to Aid the Herndon Defense, Oct. 1935, Reference Center for Marxist Studies, Tamiment Library.

55. Interview, Donald L. West, Feb. 5, 1975, by Alex Baskin, Stony Brook, New York, Hedy West/Don West Papers, Athens, University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library; Interview, Donald L. West, by Jacqueline Dowd Hall and Ray Faherty, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library, Southern Oral History Collection, File 4007, E-15 and E-16; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 110–12; "Memorandum," ca. May 1933, RGASPI, Delo 2929, Reel 225; Woodward Interview; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 221. For evidence of the Socialist Party's weakness in Georgia, see Millis to Senior, June 18, July 26, and Nov. 18, 1932, Raoul Family Papers, Boxes 17 and 18.

56. West Interview by Baskin; West Interview, Southern Oral History Collection; "Memorandum," n.d., ca. May 1933; RGASPI, Delo 2929, Reel 225; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 111–12; Egerton, 159. For full coverage of Don West's role in the Herndon Defense Committee, see James J. Lorence, *A Hard Journey: The Life Don West* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 37–38, 47–49; Gilmore, 174–77.

57. W.G.B., "Report on Southern ILD Tour," Jan. 9–10, 1933, RGASPI, Delo 3010, Reel 255; *Atlanta Daily World*, Jan. 22, 1933; Klehr, 333; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 76–77.

58. Ross to Secretariat, Central Committee, March 2, 1933; Hall, "Report on the Situation in Atlanta," n.d., RGASPI, Delo 3311, Reel 255.

59. "Weekly Letter," Atlanta, Georgia Section, Nov. 21, 1933; Ross to Secretariat, Central Committee, March 2, 1933, RGASPI, Delos 3310–11, Reel 255; *Southern Worker*, May 20, 1933; see also Ross, "Utilize Rising Militancy in South," *Party Organizer*, Nov. 1933, for comment on the organizational obstacle presented by white resistance to racial equality in the South.

60. Alexander to Reece, June 22, 1932, Raper Papers, Folder 3966; Daisy Lampkin to Roy Wilkins, Feb. 4, 1933, NAACP Papers, Branch Files, Atlanta, Box G-44; Wilkins to Lampkin, Jan. 31, 1933, NAACP Papers (microfilm edition), Roy Wilkins File, Box 80, Reel 91; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 69–70.

61. Hudson Interview Transcript, Tape 18 1 (190), Hosea Hudson File, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library, Southern Oral History Program, File 4007.

62. For evidence of the attack on the ILD and Atlanta party leaders, including the campaign's smothering impact on the local movement, see Hudson Interview Transcript. For discussion of the ongoing Red Scare, see Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 121–39.

Chapter 3. Beyond Atlanta

1. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 39–42, 49–52; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 119–24.

2. Lorena Hickok to Harry L. Hopkins, Jan. 14, 1934, Harry L. Hopkins Papers, Hyde Park, N.Y., Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Box 57; Woodruff to Gifford, Nov. 17, 1931, NA, RG 73, PECE/POUR Series 10, State Files, Georgia. For discussion of the origins and development of the Share Croppers Union in Alabama, see Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 138–41; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 121–22; Lowell K. Dyson, *Red Harvest: The Communist Party and American Farmers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 87, 94–98; Stuart Marshall Jamieson, *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture*, Dept. of Labor, Bulletin no. 836 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1945), 289, 293–300; for a riveting narrative account see Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (New York: Vintage, 1984); and "A Sharecropper Tells the Story," *Labor Defender*, Sept. 1931.

3. "Plan of Work for Agrarian Department," ca. Jan. 1, 1930; "Material for Discussion on Agricultural Work," ca. June 1930, Lement Harris Papers, Iowa City, University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department, Box 1; Klehr, 333.

4. Harris, Al Murphy Interview, Jan. 1978, in Harris Papers, Box 7; Ottanelli, 40; Klehr, 334.

5. Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 226; see also Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 52–53, and Klehr, 335; "The Situation in District 17 and the Tasks of the Party," ca. 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2925, Reel 225; "Draft Resolution on Negro Work, Feb., 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2734, Reel 213.

6. G. L. Hoffman to J. L. Bates, Sept. 23, 1931; Mrs. E. M. Foley to Walter White, Oct. 3, 1931; Nugent Dodds to Roy Wilkins, Oct. 20, 1931; Sallie Miller to Mr. Abbot, Aug. 10, 1931; Miller to Mr. Andrews, Sept. 1, 4, 1931; William T. Andrews to Miller, Aug. 21, 1931; "Negroes Lashed in Georgia, NAACP Appeals to Justice Department," n.d.; all in NAACP Papers, Reel 17; "By a Farmer Correspondent," Silver Creek and Cedartown, *Southern Worker*, March 21, 1931.

7. Tom Johnson, *Reds in Dixie*, 21–22, 31–34; "Critical Review of Our Agrarian Work," Jan. 19, 1932; "The Militant Program for Toiling Farmers, First Draft," ca. Jan. 1932; Agit-Prop Dept., "Outline for Discussion on the Agrarian Question," Dec. 1931, all in Harris Papers, Box 1; "Farmers of the South, Fight Starvation," *Southern Worker*, Jan. 24, 1931, in James S. Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South,* 137–39; Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 86. For discussion of self-determination for the Black Belt, see Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 84; Ottanelli, 40; Klehr, 326–27; "Draft Resolution on the Negro Question in the United States," n.d., Theodore Draper Papers, Atlanta, Emory University Special Collections, Box 15.

8. Memorandum, n.d., ca. Sept. 1932, Michelson Papers, Box 1; Nat Ross to Secretariat, CC, Aug. 3, 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2828, Reel 225; Roy Le Craw, "Atlanta Civic Leader Tells How Jobless Are Being Given Fresh Start on State's Abandoned Farms," *New York American*, ca. Sept. 1932, Harris Papers, Box 1; *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept. 14 and Oct. 8, 1932; John H. Cobb to Comrade, Sept. 18, 1932, RGASPI, Delo 2928, Reel 225; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 16.

9. "Farmers of the South, Fight Starvation," n.d., Harris Papers, Box 1; *Atlanta Daily World*, Oct. 27, 1932; "The New Deal in the Black Belt," May 1, 1934, Raper Papers, Folder 3966; "Report on Agrarian Work in the South to Meeting of the Negro Department, Jan. 18," Feb. 3, 1932, Allen Papers, Box 3. Planter concerns over the impact of Red Cross aid on the willingness of farm workers to pick cotton at prevailing wages are discussed in Arthur Raper, *Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 256–57.

10. "Negroes Die, Reds Go Free, Says Editor," Dec. 30, 1932, Clyde Johnson Papers, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library, Southern Historical Collection, Box 9; *Atlanta Daily World*, Dec. 29, 1930; Clyde Johnson, Reply to Dale Rosen's Questionnaire on the Share Croppers Union, Feb. 22, 1978, Southern Oral History Collection, Clyde Johnson Papers, Folder 4642; Alexander to Rt. Rev. F. F. Reese, June 22, 1932, Raper Papers, Folder 3966.

11. "Negro Farmers under the New Deal," May 16, 1935, Guy Benton Johnson Papers, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library, Southern Historical Collection, Folder 3826; Hickok to Hopkins, Jan. 23, 1934, Hopkins Papers, Box 57; Lement Harris, *My Tale of Two Worlds* (New York: International, 1986), 118, see also 116; Hickok to Hopkins, Jan. 11 and 14, 1934, Hopkins Papers, Box 57.

12. Raper, "The Black Belt Farmers of Alabama and Georgia: Foreclosures

and Uses and Abuses of Federal Loans and Red Cross Service," Spring 1933, Raper Papers, Folder 3966; Interview, Arthur Raper by Clifford Kuhn, Atlanta, Atlanta History Center, Living Atlanta Oral History Collection, Box 39; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 16–17.

13. James S. Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South,* 51; Rollin Chambliss, "What Negro Newspapers of Georgia Say about Some Social Problems, 1933" (unpublished MA thesis, University of Georgia, 1934), 93, see also 94–95; "The Communist Party Addresses These Lines to the Working People of the Southern Farms," n.d., ca. 1933, Harris Papers, Box 2.

14. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 22, 106–7, 120–21, 183, 195–96.

15. John P. Davis, "The Negro in Labor Struggles since the New Deal," n.d., and Davis, "Negro Farmers under the New Deal: Prepared for the Joint Committee on Recovery," May 16, 1935, both in Guy Benton Johnson Papers, Folder 3826; Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Share croppers Union," Feb. 20, 1978, Clyde Johnson Papers, Folder 4642; Al Murphy to Central Committee, June 10, 1933, RGASPI, Delo 3311, Reel 255; see also "To the Central Committee, June 10, 1933, Solomon/Kaufman Papers, Box 1; F. Ray Marshall, *Labor in the South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 157.

16. "To the Central Committee," June 10, 1933, Solomon/Kaufman Papers, Box 1. White interest in SCU, though muted, is discussed in Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 47–48.

17. Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecroppers Union;" *Labor Unity*, Feb. 1934; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 159.

18. "To the Farmers and Workers of Floyd and Bartow Counties," 1933, Highlander Research and Education Center Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Box 29; "Recollections of the Sharecroppers Union"; FBI Report, "Donald L. West," Louisville, Ky., Jan. 20, 1942, File No. 100–20396–5X, Files Obtained Under Freedom of Information Act Request [hereafter FOIA Files], in Hedy West/Don West/ Papers; West Interview by Baskin; see also Don West Matter File, Martha Berry Collection, Subject File Correspondence, Rome, Ga., Berry College Archives; *New Republic*, Oct. 4, 1933; Ovida Dickey and Doyle Mathis, *Berry College: A History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 66–68.

19. Walker Martin to Martha Berry, Oct. 9, 1933; "Protest Injustice to Berry Students," ca. Aug. 1933, Highlander Papers, Boxes 28 and 321; West Interview by Baskin; FBI Report, "Donald L. West; Walker Martin, "To the Students from Whom I Have Received Protest Letters of Berry High School for Boys and Berry College," ca. Oct. 1933, Berry Collection, Don West Matter File; Carol Ann Guthrie, "Education and the Evolution of the South: A History of the Berry Schools, 1902–1970" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1994), 87–88; see also Lorence, *Hard Journey*, 41–42.

20. *New Republic*, Oct. 4, 1933; Walker Martin to Matson, Oct. 7, 1933; Martin to Merle, Dec. 17, 1932; Martin to Martha Berry, Oct. 9, 1933; "Report on National Student League," ca. Oct. 1933, all in Berry Collection, Don West

Matter File; Guthrie, 91; Dickey and Mathis, 13–14; Dunbar, 54; Lorence, *Hard Journey*, 42–43; on the National Student League, see Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 63; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 247.

21. Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecroppers Union."

22. Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 254–55; Klehr, 335; Chambliss, 93–95; Marshall, 157.

23. Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecroppers Union; Syd Benson, "Report on the Montgomery Section," Oct. 2, 1933, RGASPI, Delo 3311, Reel 255; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 63.

24. John P. Davis, "Negro in Labor Struggles since the New Deal"; Jamieson, 298; Benson, "Report on Montgomery Section," Oct. 2, 1933; Clyde Johnson, "Reply to Dale Rosen's Questionnaire on the Share Croppers Union."

25. Ross to Central Committee, Feb. 23, 1934, RGASPI, Delo 3385, Reel 281; Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecropper's Union."

26. Raper, "Report of the Secretary of the Georgia Committee on Race Relations to the Annual Meeting," March 15, 1933, Raper Papers, Folder 3966; Raper Interview by Kuhn.

27. Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 315; Hickok to Hopkins, Jan. 11, 1934, Hopkins Papers, Box 57; Bartley, 174; Raper, "New Deal in the Black Belt."

28. Hickok to Hopkins, Jan. 14, 1934, Hopkins Papers, Box 57; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 17; Jacob Baker to Gay Bolling Shepperson, Aug. 31, 1933; B. F. Saunders to Hugh Johnson, Aug. 7, 1933 (telegram); NA, RG 69, FERA Central Files, State Series, Ga., 1933–36, Box 64, File 400; Raper, "Black Belt Farmers of Alabama and Georgia," Spring 1933, and Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Annual Report, Dec., 1933, 5–6, both in Raper Papers, Folder 3966.

29. "A History of the Georgia Civil Works Administration," 1934, Gay Bolling Shepperson Papers, Atlanta, Atlanta History Center, Box 1; Shepperson to Harry L. Hopkins, Sept. 21, 1934, NA, RG 69, FERA Central Files, 1933–36, Old General Subject Series, Box 7.

30. W. J. Stanley et al. to Gay Shepperson, Jan. 19, 1934, Richard B. Russell Papers, Athens, University of Georgia Libraries, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Series IV, Box 12.

31. Hickok to Hopkins, Jan. 23 and 14, 1934, Hopkins Papers, Box. 57.

32. Al Murphy, "The Sharecropper's Union Grows and Fights," *Party Organizer* 7 (May–June, 1934), 45–48; see also Murphy to the Central Committee, CPUSA, June 16, 1933 and Benson, "Report on Montgomery Section," Oct. 2, 1933, both in RGASPI, Fond 1, Delo 3311, Reel 255.

33. "Report—Share-croppers Union of Alabama," 1935, Southern Tenant Farmers Union Papers (hereafter STFU Papers), Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library Special Collections, Southern Historical Collection, Folder 3472. For discussion of STFU interest in the progress of SCU, including a possible alliance, see Mark Fannin, *Labor's Promised Land: Radical Visions*

of Gender, Race, and Religion in the South (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 114–18.

34. Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 294–95.

Chapter 4. The Great Upheaval

1. Alan Johnstone to Harry Hopkins, Sept. 18, 1933, Shepperson Papers, Box 1; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 22–23. For comment on Georgia's inadequate relief system, see Forrest A. Walker, *The Civil Works Administration: An Experiment in Federal Work Relief, 1933–1934* (New York: Garland, 1979), 53, 61.

2. Johnstone, "Report on the State of Georgia," Oct. 19, 1933, NA, RG 69, Records of the WPA, FERA Central Files, 1933–36, Georgia 401.2, Box 66; Johnstone to Hopkins, Sept. 18, 1933.

3. Frederic Chiselbrook to Homer C. Parker, June 20, 1933; "To the Honorable Mayor Thomas Gamble, July 10, 1933; Chiselbrook to Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 31, 1933, all in NA, RG 69, FERA Central Files, 1933–36, GA 453.1, Box 69.

4. J. R. Bennett et al. to Hopkins, ca. Aug. 1, 1933; unidentified author to Hopkins, Nov. 8, 1933; three Augusta relief workers to Hugh L. Johnson, Nov. 8, 1933, all in NA, RG 69, FERA Central Files, 1933–36, GA 453.1, Boxes 69, 70.

5. Reginald A. Johnson to T. Arnold Hill, July 21, 1933, NUL Papers, Series 4, Box 27; Interview, Wilma Van Dusseldorp, Atlanta, Atlanta History Center, Living Atlanta Collection; see also Ferguson, 136–37, and Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 211–12.

6. Van Dusseldorp Interview; Raper, "Effects of Application of NRA upon Negroes," Dec. 5, 1933, and "Memorandum," YWCA, Sept. 15, 1933, both in Raper Papers, Folder 3966; Press Notes, Guy Benton Johnson Papers, Folder 1143; Ferguson, 136; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 212.

7. *Atlanta Daily World*, Aug. 24, 25, 28, and Sept. 1, 1933; Ferguson, 136–37; see also Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), 126–29, 209; Sullivan, 50.

8. *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Dec. 8 and 29, 1933; *Atlanta Daily World*, Dec. 14, 1933.

9. *Party Organizer* 6 (Dec. 1933): 26, 28.

10. Raper to Guy B. Johnson, ca. Nov. 1933, Guy Benton Johnson Papers, Folder 1266; Millis to R. B. Eleazar, Nov. 7, 1933, Raoul Family Papers, Box 17; *Southern Worker*, Sept. 20, 1933; Affiliation Cards, Unemployed Councils, Dec. 15 and 30, 1933, RGASPI, Delo 3357, Reel 258.

11. Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 88–89, 91–92; Ferguson, 57, 62; *Southern Worker*, Sept. 20, 1933; see also Press Release, June 5, 1934, Michelson Papers, Box 1.

12. "Bulletin of the National Unemployment Council," Aug. 1934, RGASPI,

Delo 3685, Reel 286; *Atlanta Constitution*, July 3 and Aug. 5, 1934; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 105–7; 116. For discussion of Benjamin Davis's role in the Herndon defense, see Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 36–40.

13. Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecropper's Union"; for further discussion of the Red Scare of 1934 and its extension beyond the unemployed movement, see "The Herndon Case," ca. Nov. 1934, ILD Papers, Reel 18; and Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, chap. 7.

14. Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection, Box 39; Kuhn, Joye, and West, 202–3, 286–87; Victoria M. Byerly, " 'What Shall a Poet Sing'? The Living Struggle of Appalachian Poet and Revolutionary Don West" (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 1994), 164, 178; Dunbar, 58; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 112.

15. Interview of Donald L. West in Wiggenton, 81–82; West Interview, Southern Oral History Collection.

16. Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 110–12; Lorence, *Hard Journey*, 47–48; Byerly, 180–84; see also West Interview, Southern Oral History Collection.

17. Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecropper's Union;" *Daily Worker*, ca. May 1934, June 11, 1934; Wiggenton, West Interview, 82; Donald L. West, "The Atlanta Situation and the Recent Herndon Decision," June 24, 1934, ACLU Papers, Reel 112; Donald L. West, "Georgia Wanted Me, Dead or Alive," *New Masses*, June 26, 1934; Byerly, 186–87; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 248; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 110–11. For full discussion of West's role in Atlanta, see Lorence, *Hard Journey*, 41–45, 47–49.

18. Regional Labor Board, Recommendation, "Rome Stove and Range Company" and "Southern Cooperative Foundry," April 19, 1935, NA, RG 25, Atlanta Regional Center, Records of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Atlanta Administrative Files, Box 1; Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecropper's Union;" *Southern Worker*, March 25, 1934; *Labor Unity*, Feb. 1934.

19. Hickok to Hopkins, Jan. 11, 14, and 23, 1934, Hopkins Papers, Box 57; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 77. For discussion of the overwhelmingly positive reaction to CWA in Georgia, see John F. Bauman and Thomas H. Coode, *In the Eye of the Great Depression: New Deal Reporters and the Agony of the American People* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988), 157. For evidence of Communist hostility to the New Deal, including NRA and CWA, see Klehr, 283, and Bernard and Jewel Bellush, "A Radical Response to the Roosevelt Presidency: The Communist Party (1933–1945)," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 10 (Dec. 1980), 647–48; southern uneasiness over the high wages paid by CWA to African Americans is discussed in Forrest A. Walker, 69–70.

20. Hickok to Hopkins, Jan. 24, 1934, Lorena Hickok Papers, Hyde Park, N.Y., Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Box 11; Jan. 23, 1934, Hopkins Papers, Box 57; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 77.

21. "Fellow Students," March 17, 1934, ILD Papers, Reel 18; Hickok to Hopkins, Jan. 23, 1934, Hopkins Papers, Box 57; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 64. Atlanta radicals were able to turn the incarceration of Angelo Herndon into a demonstration of discrimination against African Americans in job displacement as well as relief policy. The result was increased tension in the liberal-radical coalition in Herndon's defense, as well as the marginalization of some of the middle-class reformers who supported him. The ILD's and Communist Party's largely effective exploitation of the Herndon case is discussed in Ferguson, 64–65.

22. Stephen Pace to Richard B. Russell, Jan. 17, 1934; J. E. Hooten et al. to Russell, Jan. 11, 1934; H. R. Hays to Russell, Jan. 6, 1934; Resolutions, Dec. 22, 1933; Elmer Bush et al. to Russell, Feb. 17, 1934, all in Russell Papers, Series IV, Boxes 4 and 12; nationwide objections to the termination of CWA employment are discussed in Forrest A. Walker, 143–46, and Bonnie Fox Schwartz, *The Civil Works Administration, 1933–1934: The Business of Emergency Employment in the New Deal* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 154–55, 210, 231–37.

23. Jane Van de Vrede, "A History of the Georgia Civil Works Administration, 1933–1934," Van de Vrede Papers, Box 1, 28–29; Memorandum and Petition, March 1, 1934, Russell Papers, Series IV, Box 10.

24. Lary, Report on Atlanta Section, April 16, 1934, RGASPI, Delo 3385, Reel 381; see also "Resolution Supporting Program of Action of League of Struggle of Negro Rights," ca. Feb. 1934, Delo 3684, Reel 286; Ferguson, 120–21. Nationwide Communist reaction to CWA and the threat of curtailment is discussed in Schwartz, 201–10.

25. Helen M. Plitt to E. D. Hamilton, April 26, 1934; Hamilton to Hopkins, Feb. 22, 1934, both in NA, RG 69, Records of the WPA, FERA Central File, 1933–1936, GA 453.1, Box 69.

26. Affidavits, Aug. 28, 1934, Harris Papers, Box 3; Bauman and Coode, 157–58; Shepperson to Hopkins, Sept. 21, 1934, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Hyde Park, N.Y., Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, President's Official File, 444, Box 2; Hickok to Hopkins, Jan. 16, 1934, in Richard Lowitt and Maurine Beasley, eds., *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 152–53; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 78–79.

27. "A History of the Georgia Civil Works Administration, 1933–1934;" Shepperson Papers, Box 1; see also Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 81–82; for discussion of the harmonious labor relations found in most states, see Forrest A. Walker, 80–81.

28. International Brotherhood of Paper Makers, "Organizing Unemployed Workers," ca. 1934, AFL Presidents File, William Green Papers, George Meany Memorial Archives, Silver Spring, Md., Box 5; Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 85.

29. *A. Steve Nance: Labor Statesman and Citizen* (Atlanta: Ruralist Press, 1938); Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 23, 33, 192–93.

30. William Nunn to Albert N. Gossett, June 1, 1934; Gossett to Hopkins, May 30, 1934, NA, RG 69, Records of the WPA, FERA Central Files, 1933–1936, State Series, Georgia, Box 71; J. Sid Tiller to Green, April 30, 1934; Green to Tiller, May 4, 1934, AFL Presidents Files, William Green Papers, Box 2; for evidence of Green's objection to CWA's treatment of skilled workers, see Forrest A. Walker, 76.

31. Shepperson to Nels Anderson, Dec. 19, 1934; L. C. Hendrix et al. to Hopkins, Dec. 7, 1934; John J. Gleeson to Anderson, Sept. 7, 1934; Shepperson to Anderson, Sept. 13, 1934; H. Carswell to Louisa deB. Fitzsimmons, Oct. 4, 1934, all in NA, RG 69, Records of the WPA, FERA Central Files, 1933–1936, State Series, Georgia 453.1, Boxes 69 and 70; CWA wage policies are discussed in Forrest A. Walker, 67–69, and Harry L. Hopkins, *Spending to Save: The Complete Story of Relief* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1936), 114, 118; AFL reaction, which largely focused on the prevailing wage, is examined in Schwartz, 106–8, 123–25.

32. Mary Barker, "A Challenge to a Courageous Committee," ca. 1934, Barker Papers, Box 10; Carolyn P. Dillard, "Workers' Education," April 12, 1939, Works Progress Administration (WPA) Papers, Athens, University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscripts Library, Box 5; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 200–201. The origins of the Workers Education Project is discussed in Joyce L. Kornbluh, *A New Deal for Workers' Education: The Workers' Service Program, 1933–1942* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), chap. 3.

33. Ferguson, 131.

34. "The Affiliated Summer School for Workers, Staff Meeting, Atlanta Worker's Educational Project," May 25, 1934, Barker Papers, Box 8; Ferguson, 133.

35. "Atlanta Project, Affiliated Summer School Report," 1934; "Affiliated Summer School for Workers, Staff Meeting," May 25, 1934, both in Barker Papers, Box 8; local suspicions of Workers' Education Project radicalism are discussed in Dillard, "Workers' Education."

36. "The Affiliated Summer School for Workers, Staff Meeting, Atlanta Workers' Education Project," May 18, 1934, Barker Papers, Box 8.

37. "The Affiliated Summer School for Workers, Staff Meeting," May 4, 1934, Barker Papers, Box 8. For evidence of efforts to brand social programs conducted by outsiders as radical, see M. J. Heale, *McCarthy's Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935–1965* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 221–22.

38. "The Affiliated Summer School for Workers, Staff Meeting," May 4, 1934, Barker Papers, Box 8. While tensions developed over appointments and objectives, the AFL unions cooperated with the program throughout the United States. For discussion of the Federation's attitudes toward the New Deal Workers' Education program, see Kornbluh, 56–57.

39. Hilton Hanna, "Atlanta Project, Affiliated Schools for Workers," ca. June 1934, and "The Affiliated Summer School for Workers, Staff Meeting," May 18, 1934, both in Barker Papers, Box 8; Ferguson, 134. Hanna's work for the

Atlanta Workers' Education Program is discussed in *Madison* (May 1981), in Hilton Hanna Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Box 1.

40. Ferguson, 135; Tom Tippett, "Atlanta Project, Affiliated Summer School Report," ca. June 1934; "The Affiliated Summer School for Workers, Staff Meeting," May 4 and 31, 1934; and Hanna, "Atlanta Project: Affiliated Summer School for Workers," ca. June 1934, all in Barker Papers, Box 8; see also Dillard, "Workers Education."

41. Kester to John Nevin Sayre, Aug. 18, 1931, John Nevin Sayre Papers, Swarthmore, Penn., Swarthmore College Library, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Box 9; for further comment on the fusion of anticommunism and racial fears in Georgia, see Heale, 221.

Chapter 5. Militant Labor

1. Dunbar Interview, Box 36; *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Aug. 4, 1933.

2. Nesbitt Spinks quoted in Kuhn, Joye, and West, 218; the use of replacement workers is examined in John A. Salmond, *The General Textile Strike of 1934: From Maine to Alabama* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 181–85, and Janet Irons, *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 122–23. For discussion of Bergoff's strikebreakers' army, see John E. Allen, "Eugene Talmadge and the Great Textile Strike in Georgia, September 1934," in *Essays in Southern Labor History: Selected Papers, Southern Labor History Conference, 1976*, ed. Gary M. Fink and Merl E. Reed (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 235.

3. Nance to Hopkins, Nov. 3, 1933, NA, RG 69, FERA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 1933–36, 400, Box 64; Brown quoted in Kuhn, Joye, and West, 220; "In the Matter of Garwood Manufacturing Company," Nov. 21, 1933; "In the Matter of Tubize-Chatillon Corp. and Local 1826, RRTW," Dec. 2, 1933; Rome Hosiery Workers, G. W. Ramaker, "To the Management and to the Workers," Dec. 2, 1933; "In the Matter of the Real Silk Hosiery Mills," all in NA, RG 25, Box 1. The origins of the conflict in Rome in 1933, as well as the impact of NRA and the failure of the textile board, is discussed in Brattain, 51–66.

4. Interview, Nannie Leah Washburn, Atlanta, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Uprising of '34 Collection, Southern Labor Archives, Box 3; *Southern Worker*, March 1934; *Labor Unity*, Feb. 1934. For the role of the Communist Party in the Rome Iron Moulders' strike, see Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecropper's Union."

5. Brattain, 33; Flamming, 198; Irons, 70.

6. Frank E. Coffee to National Labor Board, May 25, 1934; Atlanta Regional Labor Board to National Labor Board, May 25, 1934 (Confirmation of Radio); Coffee to National Labor Relations Board, ca. May 1934, all in NA, RG 25, Box 6.

7. Quotations from Irons, 85, and "Labor Complaints Received and Acknowledged by the Cotton Textile National Industrial Relations Board and Complaints Investigated by the Code Authority, Aug. 12, 1933 to August 6, 1934," United Textile Workers of America Papers (hereafter UTW Papers), Atlanta, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Pullen Library, Box 447.

8. O. E. Petry to Robert W. Bruere, June 23, 1934, NA, RG 25, Box 2; Irons, 85.

9. Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 256–57; Irons, 102; 115–16; "Report to the Executive Council," Aug. 30–31, 1934, UTW Emergency Council Meetings, Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Box 674; Nance to Coffee, Aug. 13, 1934 (telegram); Atlanta Regional Labor Board to National Labor Relations Board, Aug. 14, 1934 (Confirmation of Radiogram); and Atlanta Regional Labor Board to National Labor Relations Board, Aug. 16, 1934 (telegram), all in NA, RG 25, Box 3; James A. Dombrowski, Diary and Notes, Aug. 11, 1934, James A. Dombrowski Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Box 15.

10. *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Aug. 24, 1934; Salmond, *General Textile Strike*, 51; John E. Allen, "Eugene Talmadge," 232.

11. *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 31, Sept. 5, 7, and 18, 1934; *Atlanta Georgian*, Sept. 17, 1934, all in Raper Papers, Folder 3966; *New York Times*, Sept. 15, 1934; "Talmadge Can't Fool This Man," n.d., and "Talmadge Is a Loose Talker! And Workers Don't Forget," n.d., both in Stetson Kennedy Papers, New York, New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Reel 2; A Southern Woman, "The Servant of the Textile Owners," *Daily Worker*, n.d., George S. Mitchell Papers, Durham, N.C., Duke University, Perkins Library Special Collections, Box 3; *Federated Press*, "Hitler Terrorism Rivaled in Georgia Concentration Camp," Jan. 17, 1935, Highlander Papers, Box 67; John E. Allen, "Eugene Talmadge," 237; Salmond, *General Textile Strike*, 51; Irons, 133; Flamming, 200; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 122; Marshall, 167.

12. Frances J. Gorman to Roosevelt (telegram), Sept. 12, 1934, Roosevelt Papers, President's Official File 407b, Box 8.

13. *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Sept. 14, 1934.

14. Interview, Calvin Freeman, Living Atlanta Collection, Atlanta, Atlanta History Center, Box 36; Etta Zimmerman quoted in Salmond, *General Textile Strike*, 186; Washburn Interview, Uprising of '34 Collection; Interview, C. Smith, Atlanta, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Uprising of '34 Collection, Southern Labor Archives, Box 3; Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection, Box 39; *Southern Worker* (Oct. 1934); Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep South*, 115; *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 7 and 27, 1934; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 121–23; "A Brief but Complete Report on Textiles," Sept. 20, 1934, RGASPI, Delo 2928, Reel 281; for further evidence of widespread support for the strike, see Salmond, *General Textile Strike*, 180–82, 185–86.

15. Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep South*, 116–17.

16. *Atlanta Georgian*, Sept. 17, 1934, in Raper Papers, Folder 3966; Dunbar and Washburn Interviews, Living Atlanta Collection, Boxes 36 and 39. Despite their efforts, Communists were unable to exert powerful influence on local strike leaders in most southern textile communities, where the memories of Gastonia remained fresh. Salmond, *General Textile Strike*, 196; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 70.

17. *Gainesville News*, Sept. 19 and 26, Oct. 10, 1934, and March 18, 1935; Wallace Hugh Warren, "Progress and Its Discontents: The Transformation of the Georgia Foothills, 1920–1970" (master's thesis, University of Georgia, 1997), 94; Interview, James A. Dunlap, April 24, 2003, Chicopee Oral History Project, Gainesville, Georgia, Gainesville State College, John Harrison Hosch Library; "Citizens of Gainesville Are Behind You," Sept. 12, 1934, Lamartine Hardman Papers, Athens, University of Georgia Libraries, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Series I, Box 3; Salmond, *General Textile Strike*, 51; Flamming, 201–2; Irons, 133–34. For details on the events in Gainesville, see James J. Lorence, "The Workers of Chicopee: Progressive Paternalism and the Culture of Accommodation in a Modern Mill Village," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 91 (Fall 2007): 302–4.

18. "Telephone Conversation between Mr. Hopkins and Miss Shepperson," Sept. 6, 1934, Hopkins Papers, Box 34; Stephen Early, "Telegraph Memo to McIntyre, for Harry Hopkins," Sept. 1, 1934, FDR Library, President's Official File 444, Box 2; *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 1 and 2, 1934; *Atlanta Journal*, Sept. 4, 1934, both in Raper Papers, Folder 3966; H. H. Swift to Roosevelt, Aug. 27, 1934, Roosevelt Papers, President's Official File 407b, Box 8; Dunbar Interview; *News-Sentinel*, Sept. 1, 1934, in Mitchell Papers, Box 3.

19. *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 27, 1934; "Meeting of the Executive Council," Sept. 22, 1934, UTW Emergency Committee Meetings, TWUA Papers, Box 674; Irons, 152–53; Salmond, *General Textile Strike*, 75–6; *Newsweek* quoted in Irons, 153; "Summary of Subversive Situation in the Fourth Corps Area on Sept. 15, 1934," *U.S. Military Intelligence Reports*, Reel 28.

20. Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection; ILD, "To President Roosevelt and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins," ca. Sept. 19, 1934, Dreiser Papers, Box 54; *Boston Post*, Sept. 28, 1934, Mitchell Papers, Box 3; Salmond, *General Textile Strike*, 189–90; John E. Allen, "Eugene Talmadge," 238; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 200.

21. Hobart Watson et al. to Roosevelt, Oct. 11, 1934; Lillian Bailey to Hopkins, Oct. 12, 1934; and Frank E. Walsh to Hopkins, Jan. 29, 1935, all in NA, RG 69, FERA State Series, Georgia, 453.1, Box 69; Susie M. Wilkins and P. L. Walker to B. M. Squires, Nov. 7, 1934, NA, RG 9, Box 132.

22. Shepperson to Nels Anderson, Oct. 13 and 29 and Nov. 16, 24, and 30, 1934; Gorman to Anderson, Oct. 22, 1934; J. Ralph Gay to Anderson, Nov. 16, 1934; Anderson to Shepperson, Nov. 21, 1934; Shepperson to Hopkins, Oct. 29, 1934; W. F. Sisemore to Anderson, Oct. 1, 1934; Anderson to Gorman, Dec. 4, 1934; M. V. Smith and J. M. Newsome to Hopkins, Nov. 12, 1934; J. O. Morgan

(GFL) to Hopkins, Dec. 6, 1934, all in NA, RG 69, FERA Central Files, State Series, Georgia 453.1, Boxes 69 and 70, and State Series, Georgia, 400, Box 64.

23. Telfair Knight to S. R. McClurd, Nov. 30, 1934, NA, RG 9, Box 132; T. M. Forbes to Gentlemen, Oct. 1, 1934; John C. Gall, "Re-employment of Strikers," Sept. 22, 1934, both in Hardman Papers, Series I, Box 3; Sloan to Squires, Nov. 13, 1934, George Sloan Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Box 6.

24. Carl E. L. Gill to Textile Labor Relations Board (Telegram), Oct. 5, 1934; Gill to Squires, Oct. 10 and Nov. 8, 1934, all in NA, RG 9, Box 42; Interview, Etta Mae Zimmerman, Atlanta, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Uprising of '34 Collection, Box 6; Interview, Effie Gray, Atlanta, Atlanta History Center, Living Atlanta Series, Box 36; Salmond, *General Textile Strike*, 189; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 122.

25. Zimmerman Interview; Hicks quoted in Kuhn, Joye, and West, 220; press analysis of management's antilabor convictions quoted in Irons, 157; see also 154; J. B. Bradley to Gill, Oct. 5, 1934, NA, RG 9, Box 42.

26. Interview, Marion "Peanut" Brown, Atlanta, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Uprising of '34 Collection, Box 3.

27. "Confidential Report on the Strike Situation in Manchester, Georgia," Hopkins Papers, Box 97; Atlanta Regional Labor Board to National Labor Relations Board (Confirmation of Radiogram), Oct. 11, 1934, NA, RG 25, Box 2; Googe to Frances Perkins, March 8, 1935 and W. D. Williams to McClurd, April 11, 1935, both in NA, RG 9, Callaway Mills File, Box 22; E. B. Newberrry to Gorman, Oct. 15, 1934, NA, RG 69, FERA State Series, Georgia, 453.1, Box 1370; C. D. Puckett to Gorman, Oct. 31, 1934; Bob Wilkins, Affidavit, Oct. 31, 1934; Telfair Knight to Squires, Nov. 21, 1934; Susie Wilkins to Squires, Nov. 28, 1934; T. A. Cook, Eviction Notice, Nov. 21, 1934, all in NA, RG 9, Box 132; J. C. Platt to Squires, Nov. 11, 1934, and Union Employees of Harmony Grove Mill to Roosevelt, Oct. 16, 1934, NA, RG 9, Aragon Mills File, Box 8, and Harmony Grove Mills File, Box 59; Interview, Arthur Duncan, Atlanta, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Uprising of '34 Collection, Box 4.

28. Duncan Interview, Box 4.

29. Hudson Interview, Folder 4007; "Summary of Subversive Situation in Fourth Corps Area on Oct. 17, 1934," *U.S. Military Intelligence Reports*, Reel 28; for full discussion of the Red Scare of late 1934, see Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 124–29; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 248; Gilmore, 180–81; see also *Southern Worker*, Nov. 1934; *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 18, 19, 22, and 26, 1934; *Atlanta Georgian*, Oct. 15, 1934; Toohey to "Dear Comrades," ca. Oct. 1934, RGASPI, Delo 3774, Reel 292.

30. *Southern Worker*, Dec. 1934; Hudson Interview; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 125–29.

31. Quoted in Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 130.

32. *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 15 and 16, 1934; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 130–33, 138–39.

33. Kester to Baldwin, Jan. 16, 1935; Lucile B. Milner to Kester, Dec. 1, 1934, and Jan. 4, 1935, Howard Anderson Kester Papers, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library Special Collections, Folder 3834 and Box 1.

34. Reavis O'Neal Jr., "The Hand of Moscow in Georgia," *Commonwealth*, Oct. 1934; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 134–35.

35. R. B. Eleazer, "Few Reds among Atlanta Negroes Says Committee," Nov. 27, 1934, Raper Papers, Folder 3966.

36. "Report on Atlanta Situation," Nov. 2, 1934, RGASPI, Delo 2929, Reel 281; Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection; Hudson Interview; see also Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep South*, 116.

37. "Report on Atlanta Situation," Nov. 2, 1934.

38. Ibid.

39. Interview, Joseph Jacobs, Atlanta, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Uprising of '34 Collection, Box B-3.

40. William Green to T. W. Poole, Nov. 23, 1934, AFL Papers, Madison, Wisconsin, Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Series 4, Box 123; "Greenville Meeting," Nov. 20, 1934, UTW Emergency Committee Meetings, TWUA Papers, Box 674; James J. Johnson et al. to Roosevelt, April 12, 1935, and Gorman to Textile Labor Relations Board, April 10, 1935; Green to Nels Anderson, June 27, 1935, all in NA, RG 9, Boxes 54 and 69; Jacobs Interview.

41. Salmond, *Great Textile Strike,* 190–91; Interview, Solomon Barkin, TWUA Papers, Tape 3, Side 2; Irons, 161; Brattain, 79–80; Woman Citizens of La Grange to Roosevelt, April 30, 1935, NA, RG 69, Calloway Mills File, Box 22; for union strength in Sept. 1935, see "Report of Local Unions" for the three months of Aug. 1–Oct. 31, 1934, TWUA Papers, Box 674.

42. *Chattanooga Times*, Oct. 21, 1935; *Greenville Piedmont*, Oct. 21, 1935; *Philadelphia Record*, Oct. 21, 1935; *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 22, 1935; Author Interviews, Joe T. Wood, Joe D. Holcomb, and Clara Mae Cagle, Chicopee Oral History Project; Lorence, "Workers of Chicopee," 308–10.

43. J. L. Bernard to Samuel R. McClurd, Dec. 3 and 28, 1935; McClurd to Bernard, Nov. 21 and 27, 1935; H. H. Rogers to U.S. Department of Labor, Oct. 16, 1935; *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 7, 1935, all in NA, RG 9, "Records Relating to Disturbances in the Textile Industry, 1933–1937," Box 25; Wood Interview.

44. Bernard to McClurd, Dec. 28, 1935; Wood, Holcomb, and Cagle Interviews; Holcomb, "Chicopee Ramblings," Chicopee Oral History Project Files; *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 12, 16, and 17, 1935; *Atlanta Journal*, Dec. 16, 1935; *Birmingham News*, Dec. 16, 1935; Lorence, "Workers of Chicopee," 311–12.

45. Interview, Solomon Barkin, TWUA Papers, Tape 3, Side 2; Tape 4, Side 1. For discussion of corporate paternalism in the southern textile industry, see Melton Alonza McLaurin, *Paternalism and Protest: Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Organized Labor, 1875–1905* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971); Flamming; Bryant Simon, "Choosing between the Ham and the Union: Paternalism in the Cone Mills of Greensboro, 1925–1930," in *Hanging by a Thread: Social Change in Southern Textiles*, ed. Jeffrey Leiter, Michael D. Schulman,

and Rhonda Zingraff (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1991), 81–89; Mary Lethert Wingerd, "Rethinking Paternalism: Power and Parochialism in a Southern Mill Village," *Journal of American History* 83 (Dec. 1996), 872–902: G. C. Waldrep III, *Southern Workers and the Search for Community: Spartanburg County, South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), esp. chap. 1; the significance of community and the development of a mill worker culture of resistance is examined in Jacqueline Dowd Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

Chapter 6. Serving Jobless Georgians

1. *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Jan. 25, 1935.

2. "Streamline Talkin' Blues," in Brown Interview; "Memorandum on Beating of Robert Henry, Union Member, La Grange," Oct. 19, 1935, Stetson Kennedy Papers, Atlanta, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Southern Labor Archives, Box 1514; Interviews, L. T. Medley, Bill Woodham, and Irene Brooks Elders, Atlanta, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Uprising of '34 Collection, Boxes 6 and 7.

3. Nels Anderson to P. L. Walker, Jan 9, 1935; Walker to Hopkins, Jan. 6, 1934, both in NA, RG 69, FERA Central Files, Georgia, 453.1, Box 70; for discussion of the prevailing wage issue in Georgia, see Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 99.

4. J. Leslie Posey to Hopkins, Oct. 1, 1935; Ralph R. Musselman to Roosevelt, Nov. 4, 1934; "Resolution," ca. July 1935; W. C. Jeffries to Hopkins, July 2, 1935; W. C. Roberts to Anderson, July 11, 1935; Shepperson to Anderson (telegram), April 9, 1935, NA, RG 69, WPA Central File, Georgia, 641, Boxes 1132 and 1133; FERA Central Files, Complaints, Georgia, 453.1, Box 69.

5. Nance to Frank Fitzgerald (telegram), Nov. 13, 1935, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1132; *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Nov. 22, 1935.

6. John Corbin to Richard Russell, Dec. 31, 1935, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, 693, Box 1160; A. D. Lewis to Anderson, Aug. 5 and 7; William Mitch to Lewis, Aug. 2, 1935; Jesse Chambley to Roosevelt, July 22, 1935; D. I. McComb to Hopkins, April 18 and May 15, 1935; NA, RG 69, FERA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 453.1, Boxes 69, 70; Richard Gammon to M. C. Tarver, July 24, 1935; Ernest Stills to Roosevelt, Sept. 27, 1935; W. Luguie to Walter George, July 15, 1935, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1132.

7. Anderson to Ramspeck, July 13, 1935, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, Georgia, 641, Box 1132; Green to Nance, June 27, 1935, AFL Papers, Series 4, Box 123; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 100.

8. Googe to Nance, Oct. 15, 1935, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, Georgia, 641, Box 1132; Harry C. Bates to Jacob Baker, Oct. 28, 1935; Georgia Federation of Labor and Atlanta Federation of Trades to Shepperson, Oct. 10, 1935,

both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, 040, Box 57; *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Oct. 25, 1935; *Daily Worker*, Sept. 16, 1935, in ILD Papers Reel 18; "Telephone Conversation between Mr. Hopkins and Miss Shepperson," Aug. 13, 1935, Hopkins Papers, Box 73; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 101. For discussion of the national context for the debate over prevailing wage, see Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 105; George McJimsey, *Harry Hopkins: Ally of the Poor and Defender of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 81–83, and Irving Bernstein, *A Caring Society: The New Deal, the Worker, and the Great Depression* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 77.

9. *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 6, 1935; *Atlanta Daily World,* Nov. 3 and 5, 1935.

10. W. M. Welsh to John Possehl, Nov. 7, 1935; Nance to Baker (telegram), Nov. 6 and 7, 1935; Nance to Edward McGrady, Nov. 6, 1935, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Boxes 1132, 1133; *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Nov. 8, 1935; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 102.

11. Quoted in Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 102; "Mr. Hopkins Telephone Conversation with Miss Shepperson," Nov. 7, 1935, Hopkins Papers, Box 73.

12. *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Nov. 15, 1935; Hugh W. Roberts to Hopkins, Nov. 8, 1935; Roberts to Roosevelt, Nov. 7, 1935, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1132.

13. Brehon Somervell, "Status of Works Program in Georgia," Nov. 16, 1935, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 610, Box 1123; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 103.

14. *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Nov. 15, 1935; *Atlanta Daily World*, Nov. 9 and 11, 1935; James L. Key to Russell, Dec. 23, 1935, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1132.

15. "Constitution of the Workers' Council," 1935, NUL Papers, Southern Regional Council File, Box A-35; Negro Workers Council to Roosevelt (telegram), May 29, 1935, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1133; Lewis Samuel et al., Petition, ca. Feb. 1935, NA, RG 69, FERA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 453.1, Box 70; R. V. Wallace to Walter White, Jan. 19, 1935, NAACP Papers, Branch Files, Atlanta, Box G-45; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 74; by 1938, four-fifths of Georgia's WPA workers were African American; Sullivan, 66.

16. Neighborhood Union to Shepperson, July 16, 1935, Atlanta Urban League Papers, Atlanta, Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Box 148; Reginald Johnson to Key, Aug. 13, 1935; Minutes of the Neighborhood Union, 1935, Neighborhood Union Papers, Boxes 3, 5; *Atlanta Daily World*, July 7, 1935; Ferguson, 118.

17. A. J. Williams to Hopkins, Oct. 21, 1935; Williams et al. to Alfred Edgar Smith, April 11, 1935, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693, Box 1160; *Atlanta Daily World*, Nov. 22, 1935.

18. *Atlanta Daily World*, Nov. 8, 1935; Johnson to T. Arnold Hill, Nov. 11, 1935, NUL Papers, Series 4, Box 27.

19. Johnson to Hill, Sept. 4, 1935, NUL Papers, Series 4, Box 27.

20. Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecroppers Union."

21. Ferguson, 59; see also Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 195.

22. Nat Ross, "Report on Situation in District 17," May 1935; "Summary of Report on Unemployment," April 27, 1935, both in RGASPI, Delo 3385, Reel 281. Ross was a frequent critic of both the Central Committee's neglect of the South and the Communist Party's organizing policies in the South. Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 128, 254; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 28, 74.

23. "Let Us Unite to Unionize the South," ca. April 1935; "Copy of Letter from Atlanta S.O.," enclosed in Ross to Central Committee, May 11, 1935, RGASPI, Delos 3905 and 3385, Reels 281 and 299; *Southern Worker*, June 1935.

24. "Weekly Letter," Oct. 6, 1935; "District 17 Resolution," Sept. 22, 1935, RGASPI, Delos 3386, 3627, Reel 281. The emerging Popular Front is discussed in Ottanelli, 84–87; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 292; Klehr, 170–71, 186–87; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 119, 137.

25. For discussion of the liberal-radical defense coalition, see Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, especially chap. 5, 156–62; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 297–98; see also " AFL Convention Backs Fight against Georgia 'Slave Insurrection' Law," ILD Press Release, Oct. 25, 1935, ILD Papers, Reel 18. The petition drive is described in the *Daily Worker*, Oct. 6, 1935, and *Atlanta Daily World*, July 12, 1935, while Herndon's comments and the AFL statement may be found in ILD Press Release, Oct. 25, 1935. See also *"Wisdom, Justice and Moderation": The Case of Angelo Herndon* (New York: Joint Committee to Aid the Herndon Defense, 1935), Reference Center for Marxist Studies, in Tamiment Library.

26. Clyde Johnson, "Recollections of the Sharecroppers Union"; "Rural Revolt in the Southeast," Citadel Conference, 1979; *Daily Worker*, Dec. 12, 1935; "A Talk with Al Murphy: A Sharecropper Leader Tells of Organizing in '30s," *Call*, Oct. 31, 1977, all in Clyde Johnson Papers, Box 9 and Folder 4642; Nat Ross to Kester, Kester Papers, Box 1; *Sharecroppers Voice*, May 1935; Albert Jackson to Comrade Butler, July 4, 1935, STFU Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Folder 3472; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 103, 169; Fannin, 114–16.

27. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 122; "Southern Conference Calls for Freedom of Herndon," Oct. 26, 1935, ILD Papers, Reel 18; "Minutes of the All Southern Conference for Civil and Trade Union Rights," May 26, 1935, Highlander Papers, Box 9; "Call for the All-Southern Conference for Civil and Trade Union Rights," May 1935, RGASPI, Delo 3386, Reel 281.

28. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 120; Ferguson, 59; "Notes on Southern Tour of Paul Porter and Clarence Senior," May 1935, Kester Papers, Box 1.

29. Ted Wellman to Herbert Benjamin, Jan. 30, 1936, RGASPI, Delo 4029, Reel 304; for further detail on Ted Wellman, see Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 15, 137; Russell to Hopkins, Jan. 7, 1936; Jacob Baker to Shepperson, Jan. 9, 1936; Shepperson to Baker (telegram), Jan. 13, 1936, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, 693, Box 1160.

30. Wellman to Benjamin, Jan. 30, 1936. For comment on the Roosevelt

administration's consistent policy of lower wages for work relief in the southern states, see Harry L. Hopkins, *Spending to Save*, 118. By 1936 the Communist Party–dominated Unemployed Councils had evolved into the renamed Unemployment Councils.

31. Wellman to Trade Union Committee and Organizing Commission, Jan. 30, 1936, RGASPI, Delo 4029, Reel 304.

32. Trade Union Commission, CC to Wellman, Feb. 28, 1936; Wellman to Organizing Commission, Central Committee and Trade Union Committee, Central Committee, Feb. 24, 1936, RGASPI, Delo 4029, Reel 304.

33. Horton to Ross, Feb. 14, 1936, RGASPI, Delo 4029, Reel 304; Hilliard Bernstein to Senior, Feb. 21, 1936, Socialist Party of America Papers, Durham, N.C., Duke University, Perkins Library Special Collections, Reel 32.

34. *Southern Worker*, March–April 1936; Minutes of the All-Southern WPA and Relief Workers Conference Held at Central Labor Hall, Chattanooga, Tenn." March 22, 1936, Highlander Papers, Box 52; Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 122–23; "List of Delegates Seated and Speakers at Second Annual Convention of the Workers Alliance of America," April 7–10, 1936, Washington, D.C., Labor Department; "Statement of the National Unemployed League, February 1935," Henry P. Slaughter Papers, Atlanta, Atlanta University Center Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Box 46; Chad Allen Goldberg, "Contesting the Status of Relief Workers during the New Deal: The Workers Alliance of America and the WPA, 1935–1941," *Social Science History* 29 (Fall 2005): 348.

35. Dave Benson to Mitchell, March 3, 1936, STFU Papers, Folder 3472; *Workers Alliance*, March 1936; Bill to "Friend Brown," March 26, 1936, RGASPI, Delo 4029, Reel 304; Hilliard Bernstein to Senior, Feb. 9, 1936; George Lambert to Senior, April 1, 1936, Socialist Party Papers, Reel 32; "Minutes of the All-Southern WPA and Relief Workers Conference," Highlander Papers, Box 52.

36. Hosie Hart and C. L. Johnson to J. R. Butler, July 13, 1936; Max to J. R. Butler, July 10, 1936; L. J. Walker to Mitchell, Jan. 8, 1936; Hosie Hart and C. L. Johnson to J. R. Butler and Mitchell, July 31, 1936, all in STFU Papers, Folder 3472; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 164, 170–71; Fannin, 118; Marshall, 157.

37. *Sharecroppers Voice*, July 1936; Tom Burke to Mitchell, March 2, 1936; Mitchell to Johnson, April 20, 1936, both in STFU Papers, Folder 3472; *Southern Worker*, Dec. 1936; Harry L. Mitchell, *Mean Things Happening in This Land: The Life and Times of H. L. Mitchell, Cofounder of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union* (Montclair, N.J.: Allenheld, Osmun, 1979), 54–55, 97–98; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 170; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 294.

38. Mitchell to Gardner Jackson, Sept. 3, 1936, STFU Papers, Folder 3472; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 170; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 295.

39. Ferguson, 60–61; Samuel Liederman to *Daily Worker* Offices, ca. 1936, RGASPI, Delo 4028, Reel 304; FBI File, "Hosea Hudson, Birmingham Files 765752 and 100–74358, Report, May 15, 1942, Hosea Hudson Papers, New York, New York University, Reference Center for Marxist Studies, Box 1, in

Tamiment Institute Library; Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep South*, 114–17; *Boston Sunday Advertiser*, Feb. 23, 1936.

40. *Atlanta Daily World*, March 9, 1936; Johnson to Hill, Jan. 7, 1936, NUL Papers, Series 4, Box 27.

41. Shepperson to Anderson, March 31, 1936; Shepperson to Nance, March 3 and Jan. 29, 1936; Nance to Anderson (telegram), March 24, 1936; Frank Blackshear et al. to Shepperson, March 17, 1936; Blackshear to Hopkins, March 31, 1936, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, 693, Box 1160 and WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1 and 641, Boxes 1161, 1132, and 1133; *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, April 3, 1936; J. B. Prather and J. L. Dobbs to Russell, April 15, 1936, Russell Papers, Series IV, Box 15.

42. James R. Moore to David K. Niles, Aug. 28, 1937; Moore to Daniel O. Collins, Aug. 16, 1937; Collins to Niles, Aug. 18, 1937; Niles to Collins, Aug. 6, 1937; Dick Hudson to Harry G. Bates, July 30, 1937; Hudson to J. W. Williams, Jan. 12, 1937; Williams to Hopkins, Jan. 18, 1937, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1133; Columbus Central Labor Union to Hon. Stephen Pace, Aug. 4, 1937; William Green to J. R. Sweat, Aug. 9, 1937; Sweat to Green (telegram), Aug. 7, 1937, all in AFL Papers, Box 2.

43. Georgina Hickey, " 'The Lowest Form of Work Relief': Authority, Gender, and the State in Atlanta's Sewing Rooms," in *The New Deal and Beyond: Social Welfare in the South since 1930*, ed. Elna C. Green (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 23; Blanche M. Ralston to Ellen S. Woodward, July 28, 1936; Mrs. Wellington Stevenson to Roosevelt, April 24 and June 24, 1936; Stevenson to Hopkins, Nov. 19, 1936, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693, Box 1160; see also Ferguson, 121–22, for discussion of the failure of the sewing projects and other such programs to alter the economic rules and social structure that limited black opportunities to unskilled labor.

44. Shepperson to Alfred E. Smith, May 18, 1937, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1131; "The WPA Program for Unemployed Women in Georgia," *Georgia State Section*, July 1937, Shepperson Papers, Box 2; *Atlanta Daily World*, April 28, 1937; Ferguson, 125.

45. J. Clifton Smith to Harold L. Ickes (telegram), Feb. 12, 1936; Unidentified Correspondents to NAACP, Jan. 21, 1936; Roy Wilkins to Alfred Edgar Smith, Feb. 4, 1936; all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161.

46. Shepperson to Niles, May 27, 28, and 29, 1937; Sept. 9, 1937; "Relievers Won't Pick Cotton Dixie Planters Are Finding," Aug. 26, 1937, Mobile, Alabama, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Boxes 1130, 1131; "Gill Defines WPA Policy Relative to Workers Accepting Private Employment," Sept. 9, 1936; "State WPA Administrators Instructed to Avoid Oversupply of Labor in Cotton Fields," Sept. 10, 1936; Gardner Jackson to Hopkins (telegram), Sept. 14, 1936; Jackson to Roosevelt, Oct. 30 and 31, 1936, STFU Papers, Reels 1 and 3; David Lasser to H. L. Mitchell, Sept. 9, 1936, STFU Papers, Folder 3472.

47. Shepperson to Anderson, Jan. 4, 1937; "Memorandum," National Urban League to Harry Hopkins, Dec. 17, 1936; W. B. Barnett and N. A. Sayles to Lawrence A. Oxley, July 14, 1936, in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161; Wolters, 207, 211 n. 23; the Roosevelt administration's insistence that WPA be administered on a nondiscriminatory basis is discussed in Sullivan, 281 n. 24.

48. "Evaluative Study—Atlanta Urban League," Aug. 9, 1937, NUL Papers, Series 5, Box 8.

49. Donald L. West, "Slavery Returns to Georgia," *Negro Digest*, Sept.–Oct. 1940, 6; "Peonage in Georgia," March 1938, STFU Papers, Folder 3472; there was an uptick in reports of peonage throughout the South, including Georgia, in the mid-1930s. Pete Daniel, *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South, 1901–1969* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 170–71, 181.

50. Forrester B. Washington to Niles, June 18, 1937; Alfred E. Smith to Walter White, June 15, 1937; T. Arnold Hill to Hopkins, June 17, 1937; "WPA Halting Work to End Labor Crisis," *Macon Telegraph*, May 15, 1937; "WPA Units Scored by Burke Farmers," *Macon Telegraph*, May 23, 1937, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1 and 640, Boxes 1161, 1130.

51. George E. Haynes to Hopkins (telegram), Sept. 16, 1937; White to Hopkins, Sept. 28, 1937; White to Niles, June 25, 1937, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 107–8.

52. "Substance of Long Distance Telephone Conversation between Miss Shepperson in Atlanta, Georgia and Mr. Brimshall," June 14, 1937; Shepperson to Niles, Oct. 28, 1937, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161.

53. Niles to Haynes, Oct. 29, 1937; Shepperson to Lucy Brown, Sept. 30, 1937, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161. Throughout the rural South during cotton-picking season, WPA "forced rural workers off relief and back into farm employment." While southern rural workers benefited marginally from WPA work, the program's effect was "limited," in that as a policy, the "projects were generally put on hold during harvest to ensure that planters had sufficient labor." John Brueggemann, "Racial Considerations and Social Policy in the 1930s: Economic Change and Political Opportunities," *Social Science History* 26 (Spring 2002): 145, 162.

54. Raper, "Summary Statement on Interviews in Six Inland Counties in Eastern Georgia," June 27–29, 1940, and "Terse Notes on Relief in Georgia Counties," July 12–13, 1940, both in Raper Papers, Folder 3966.

55. "The Condition of Farm Labor on Cotton Plantations in the South and Southwest in 1938," 1938, and "Dear Sir," Jan. 19, 1938, both in STFU Papers, Folder 3472; Gordon McIntire, "Dear Friends," ca. 1937, Clyde Johnson Papers, Box 2; Fannin, 119.

56. Eugene Martin to White, April 24, 1937; Clarence Mitchell to White, May 3, 1937; Washington to White, May 8, 1936, Jan. 28, April 26 and 27, 1937;

Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee on Administration of the NAACP, April 27, 1937, all in NAACP Papers, Branch Files, Atlanta, Box G-44. For comment on the Atlanta American Legion's tendency to equate any hint of racial liberalism with Communist inspiration, see Ferguson, 92–93, and Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 180.

57. Minutes, Southern Conference, Socialist Party, Norris, Tenn., Jan. 2–3, 1937, AFL-CIO, Region 8 Papers, Southern Labor Archives, Box 1869; Johnson to Sirs and Brothers, ca. 1937, Clyde Johnson Papers, Box 3; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 171–72; Fannin, 114–15.

58. Green to F. J. Dillon (telegram), April 19, 1937; Googe to Green, Aug. 25, 1936, April 3 and 24, June 19, 1937, AFL Papers, Series 11, File C, Boxes 2, 34, and 38.

59. Googe to Green, June 19, 1937; James R. Moore Jr. to Green, June 28, 1937, AFL Papers, Series 11, File C, Boxes 34, 38; *Atlanta Journal*, April 22 and 24, 1937, in Francis G. Dillon Papers, Detroit, Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library, ALUA, Scrapbook 3.

60. *Labor Unity*, May 1937; "Joint CIO-UTW Southern Organizing Committee," ca. 1937, UTW Papers, Box 446; Ottanelli, 146; Klehr, 227; Flamming, 210.

61. Minutes of Party Textile Conference, Feb. 21, 1937, and "To All District and Section Organizers in Textile Centers and to Members of the National Fraction," ca. Oct. 1936, both in UTW Papers, Boxes 446, 432.

62. Textile Workers Organizing Committee, "News Letter for Regional Directors," Dec. 6, 1937; Albert W. Cox to Gorman, March 12, 1937, both in UTW Papers, Boxes 449, 447.

63. "News Letter for Regional Directors," Dec. 6, 1937; for discussion of the CIO's initiative in creating union unemployed committees, see Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 160–61; David Montgomery and Ronald Schatz, "Facing Layoffs," in *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles*, ed. David Montgomery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 139–49.

64. *Southern Worker*, Oct. 1936.

65. Washburn Interview, Living Atlanta Collection, Box 39; Benjamin Davis to Alfred Edgar Smith, ca. Feb 11, 1937; Davis to Roosevelt, Dec. 22, 1936, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161.

66. Rob Hall, "Establishing the Party in the South," *Party Organizer*, 10 (Aug. 1937), 28–29; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 169–70; *Southern Worker*, June 1936; *Atlanta Daily World*, June 10, 1936.

67. Ferguson, 160; Charles H. Martin, *Angelo Herndon Case*, 170.

68. *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, May 23, 1937; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 108.

69. Workers Alliance of America, Minutes, NAC Meeting, June 26, 1937; "Emergency Bulletin," June 17, 1937, both in J. B. Matthews Papers, Durham, N.C., Duke University, Perkins Library Special Collections, Box 567.

70. WPA Garment Workers of Atlanta, Georgia, "Resolution," June 10, 1937; Reginald A. Johnson to Alfred Edgar Smith, July 20, 1937, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1133; Johnson to Hill, July 1, 1937, NUL Papers, Series 4, Box 27.

71. Petition to Hon. Harry L. Hopkins, Oct. 23, 1936; Miss Wathen to Mr. Williams, July 20, 1936; John B. Huff and T. S. Wellman to Hopkins, July 13, 1936, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1132; Workers Alliance of America, "Statement of Dues Paid," ca. June 1937, Matthews Papers, Box 568.

72. Shepperson to Niles, June 14, 1937; Frank M. Lynch to Ray Cook, Aug. 7, 1936, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Boxes 1132, 1133.

Chapter 7. The Workers Alliance and a United Front

1. J. W. Williams to Hopkins, Jan. 18, 1937; Richard Hudson to Williams, Jan. 12, 1937, both in NA, RG 69, Records of the WPA, Central File, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1133.

2. Moore to Daniel O. Collins, July 31 and Aug. 16, 1937; Moore to David K. Niles, Aug. 28, 1937, NA, RG 69, Records of the WPA, Central File, States, Georgia, 641, Box 1133.

3. "Evaluative Study, National Urban League, Aug. 9, 1937; Shepperson to Boyce M. Edens, July 28, 1937, both in NUL Papers, Series 4, Box 27, and Series 8, Box 5.

4. "The American Legion and the Atlanta Branch Meeting," April 27, 1937; Eugene Martin to Walter White, April 24, 1937; Forrester B. Washington to White, May 8, 1936, and Jan. 28, April 27 and 28, 1937, all in NAACP Papers, Branch Files, Atlanta, Box G-44.

5. Clarence Mitchell to White, May 3, 1937, NAACP Papers, Branch Files, Atlanta, Box G-44; *Atlanta Daily World*, April 6, 1938; *Southern Worker*, June and Oct. 1936.

6. "Reliefers Won't Pick Cotton Dixie Planters Are Finding," Aug. 26, 1937, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Box 1131; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 107.

7. George E. Haynes to Hopkins (telegram), Sept. 16, 1937, and White to Hopkins, Sept. 28, 1937, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161. For evidence of escalating national publicity in 1936 and 1937 surrounding peonage in Georgia and elsewhere, see Daniel, 170–72.

8. Smith to White, Oct. 5, 1937; Niles to White, Oct. 6, 1937; Shepperson to Niles, Oct. 28, 1937; Smith to T. Arnold Hill, June 18, 1937, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161. For comment on the activities of A. E. Smith and his office in Washington, see *Atlanta Daily World*, July 18, 1938.

9. Hill to Hopkins, June 17, 1937; Washington to Niles, June 18, 1937; White

to Niles, June 24, 1937, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia 693.1, Box 1161.

10. "Substance of Long Distance Telephone Conversation between Miss Shepperson in Atlanta, Georgia and Mr. Brimhall," June 14, 1937; Shepperson to Niles, June 23, 1937, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, States, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 107.

11. Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 108, 111–12; Malcolm B. Catlin, "Relief and Economic Statistics, Georgia," NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Box 1131. The pressure on government and private relief and employment programs is discussed in "Religious, Political, and Social Forces in Georgia," Aug. 1938, Raper Papers, Folder 3966.

12. Interview, Homer L. Pike, Federal Writers Project Papers, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library Special Collections, Southern Historical Collection, Folder 3709; Ferguson, 134, 292 n. 55; "Memorandum, Adult Education Project," March 1, 1940, Van de Vrede Papers, Box 1; Ernestine L. Friedman, "Report on Atlanta," Oct. 21–27, 1937; "Excerpt from Letter from Georgia," May 22, 1940, both in Hilda Smith Papers, Hyde Park, N.Y., Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Box 14; Carolyn P. Dillard, "Workers Education," April 12, 1939, WPA—Georgia Records Survey Papers, Box 5; see also Kornbluh, 104.

13. Mitchell to Gordon McIntyre, Sept. 6, 1937, and Mitchell, "Memorandum," ca. Aug. 1938, both in STFU Papers, Folder 3472.

14. Ellen Quinn to J. R. Butler, Jan. 10, 1938; Mitchell to Locals, Nov. 19, 1937, and Jan. 12, 1938; Butler to Gussie Haynie, Jan. 12, 1938, all in STFU Papers, Folder 3472.

15. "Cotton Notes," April 26, 1938, TWUA Papers, File 14A, Box 1; "Resolution Adopted by Fortieth Annual Convention, Georgia Federation of Labor," April 20–22, 1938, AFL Papers, Box 2.

16. For discussion of the UAW initiative, as well as the activity of the CIO in organizing the unemployed, see Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 140–45, 176–81; see also Montgomery and Schatz, 139–49.

17. FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, Jan. 28, 1941, Atlanta File 100–326, New York File 61–7586–126 (FOIA); Interview, Joseph Jacobs, March 6, 1991, Atlanta, Georgia State University, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Southern Labor Archives, Box 3A, 5–6. Like the national Workers Alliance, the Atlanta organization treated the unemployed project worker as "rights-bearing, independent citizen earners." Goldberg, 160.

18. "Statement of Dues Paid," June 1937; "Total WPA" and "Emergency Bulletin," June 17, 1937; "Report of National President David Lasser to the 3rd Annual Convention, Workers Alliance of America," June 22–25, 1937, all in Matthews Papers, Boxes 567, 568; Resolutions, Local 1, WPA Garment Workers of Atlanta, Georgia, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia 641, Box 1133. For evidence of the persistent activism of unemployed organizations in the Atlanta area from the early 1930s onward, including the role of Commu-

nists in that agitation, see Ferguson, 160–62; Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 195–97, 213; Washburn Interview, Uprising of '34 Collection. CIO opposition to the budget-minded Malcomb Tarver is discussed in Flamming, 251–52; Brattain, 155–56. The WPA layoffs are discussed in Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 153–54.

19. Hardy Scott and M. J. Pike to Robert Ramspeck, March 9, 1938; Scott and Pike to Hopkins, March 9, 1938, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1135; Scott and Pike to Green, March 9, 1938, AFL Papers, Box 2; *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Jan. 14, 1938.

20. Washburn Interview, Uprising of '34 Collection; Scott to Hopkins, April 25, 1938; Scott to Williams, May 1, 1938; Grace Darnell to Roosevelt, March 28, 1938; L. W. Duke to Hopkins, July 13, 1938, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Boxes 1133, 1135.

21. FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, Jan. 28, 1941.

22. *Work*, April 9 and June 4, 1938; *Atlanta Constitution*, May 12, 1938; Lasser to Roosevelt, May 19, 1938, and Lasser to Hopkins, June 23, 1938, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, General, Boxes 57, 58.

23. *New South*, Aug. 1938 and Jan. 1939, in Crouch Papers, Box 2; *Work*, July 16 and 30, 1938; *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, July 1, 1938; *New York Times*, June 27, 1938; Hosea Hudson, "Dear Friends," Jan. 1955, Hosea Hudson Papers, New York, New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Box 2.

24. *Work*, July 16 and 30, 1938.

25. *Work*, Aug. 27 and Sept. 10, 1938; *Atlanta Daily World*, Aug. 12, Sept. 4 and 15, 1938.

26. *Work*, Nov. 19, 1938; FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Jan. 28, 1941; Hilda Smith to Florence Kerr, May 4, 1939, Hilda Smith Papers, Box 14; *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 9, 1938; Narrative, "Pine Mountain Valley," July 1939, Federal Writers Project Papers, Folder 3709.

27. "Reports and Proceedings 4th Annual Convention, Workers Alliance of America," Cleveland, Sept. 23–26, 1938, in FBI File, "Workers Alliance," n.d., File 61–7586, see also Matthews Papers, Box 568; Lasser to Roosevelt, n.d., Roosevelt Papers, President's Official File 2366; *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept. 14, 1938. For discussion of the Alliance's overtures toward CIO and pursuit of affiliation, as well as CIO resistance to any direct tie with it, see Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 194–95.

28. Communist Party of Georgia, "Georgia Legislative Letter, December 1938," FBI File, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, Jan. 28, 1941, Atlanta File 100–326 and New York File 61–7586.

29. Lasser to John Donovan, Oct. 1 and Nov. 18, 1938, Matthews Papers, Box 568; FBI File, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, Jan. 28, 1941; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 155–58; Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep South*, 70–71.

30. *Work*, Sept. 24, 1938; Ferguson, 160.

31. Shepperson to Niles, Sept. 12, 13, and 14, 1938; Niles to Shepperson, Sept.

22, 1938; Niles to Benjamin, Sept. 9 and 19, 1938; Niles to Lawrence W. Duke, Sept. 7, 1938; Benjamin to Niles, Sept. 3, 1938; Duke to Niles and Hopkins, Aug. 30 and 31, 1938, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1133.

32. Ferguson, 161–62; Niles to Scott, Oct. 10, 1938; Frances Perkins to Hopkins, Sept. 30, 1938; Scott to Roosevelt, Oct. 14, 1938; Scott to Hopkins, Oct. 5, 1938; Workers Alliance of America, General Local G1394, Atlanta, "Resolutions," Oct. 10, 1938, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1133; *STFU News*, July–Aug. 1938, and "WPA to Hire Farm Labor: Hopkins Outlines President's Plan for South," both in Claude Williams Papers, Detroit, Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library, ALUA, Box 16; *Huntsville Times*, July 23, 1938. Because many tenants, sharecroppers, and farm laborers were not "attempting to make farming arrangements," the Georgia WPA decided to "release all farm laborers during the 1938 harvesting season." Hence, the Alliance's criticisms had a firm basis in fact. Quoted in Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 112.

33. Smith to James C. McMorries, Sept. 8, 1938; Smith to C. A. Scott, Sept. 12, 1938; McMorries to Hopkins, Aug. 11, 1938; C. A. Scott to Hopkins, Aug. 23, 1938, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Box 1131; Eugene Kincle Jones, "Memorandum," Aug. 10, 1938; E. Frederic Morrow to Hopkins (telegram) Aug. 12, 1938; NAACP Administrative Files, NAACP Papers, Box BC-286; D. A. Griffin and P. H. Benson to Hopkins, Aug. 20, 1938, STFU Papers, Folder 3472; *Huntsville Times*, July 22, 1938.

34. Niles to Emory C. Cook, Oct. 27, 1938; Niles to United WPA Union, Dec. 7, 1938; H. J. Pike to Roosevelt, Oct. 4, 1938; Workers Alliance WPA Local 2, Resolutions, Oct. 21, 1938; United WPA Union to Roosevelt (telegram), Nov. 27, 1938, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1133; *Atlanta Daily World*, Oct. 25, 1938.

35. Pike Interview; Benjamin to Niles, July 18 and Aug. 9, 1938; O. Hanson et al. to Lasser, July 11, 1938; Niles to Benjamin, Aug. 15, 1938; Lasser to Niles, Aug. 3, 1938; Shepperson to Niles, June 14, 1937, and Aug. 16, 1938; Niles to Shepperson (telegram), Feb. 10, 1938; Frank M. Lynch to Labor Policies Board, March 12, 1938; Lynch to Ray Cook, Aug. 7, 1936; R. L. Durham to Hopkins, Oct. 23, 1936, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Boxes 1132, 1133, 1134.

36. Hudson, "Black Workers of the Deep South Notebook," n.d., Hosea Hudson Papers, New York, New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Box 3; for further comment on the Alliance's successes, including its potential as a mass action organization, see Ferguson, 161–62. Kelley emphasizes the limits placed on the Alliance as a class movement by its decision to adopt the traditional labor union model from 1937 on. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 158.

37. Lawrence Camp, "Memorandum," Dec. 20, 1938, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 610, Box 1123; Roosevelt loyalists complained that

during the primary, Shepperson's office had thrown WPA votes to George and used the agency to "punish Camp supporters," unproven charges that even Camp denied. Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 110–11, 170.

Chapter 8. Winding Down

1. Ferguson, 160; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 156. For comment on the impact of the prewar and wartime economic boom in Georgia and the South, see Charles D. Chamberlain, *Victory at Home: Manpower and Race in the American South during World War II* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), esp. chaps. 1 and 2; Neil R. McMillan, ed., *Remaking Dixie: The Impact of World War II on the American South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), esp. chaps. 1, 4, and 5; Brattain, 88–89; Flamming, 234–35; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 113–14; Kuhn, Joye, and West, 360–64; Patton, *Carpet Capital*, 52–53.

2. "The End of the Alliance with Roosevelt," 1940, Folsom-Elting Collection, Boulder, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries, Special Collections, Box I; for discussion of the "unemployables," see Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 284–85.

3. Quoted in Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 113; see also "WPA: Average Number of Persons Employed on Projects, Semi-Annually, December 1935 through June 30, 1942," in ibid., 333; "Effect of Assignment Restrictions," ca. April 1939, and "Statements Regarding Number Separate Individuals Who Have Been Employed on Work Relief Programs, and Information on Turnover of Persons on WPA Rolls," ca. April 1939, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 610–11, and 641, Boxes 1124, 1131.

4. FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, Jan. 28, 1941; Hudson Interview; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 155.

5. "Report of Proceedings of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare," Birmingham, Ala., Nov. 20–23, 1938, in STFU Papers, Folder 3472; for discussion of the Communists' role at the founding meeting of SCHW, including both announced party members and others in the WAA delegation, see Klehr, 276–78; *New South*, Aug. 1938 and Jan. 1939; Claudine Eskew and H. J. Pike to Roosevelt, Nov. 22, 1938, and Lasser to Roosevelt, Dec. 20, 1938, both in Roosevelt Papers, President's Official File 2366; Lasser and Benjamin to Aubrey Williams, Dec. 17, 1938, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, General, 1935–44, Box 58. SCHW support for labor, including regional wage equity, is noted in Linda Reed, *Simple Decency and Common Sense*, 26–27.

6. Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 247, 249–50; Workers Alliance of America, "National Bulletin," March 11 and 29, 1939, Matthews Papers, Box 568; *Work*, March 25, 1939; Benjamin to James E. Sargent, Aug. 1 and 31, 1981, Folsom-Elting Collection, Box I; Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep South*, 74–75. For evidence of Woodrum's long history of opposition to WPA appropriations, see Klehr, 298; James E. Sargent, "Woodrum's Economy Bloc," *Virginia Magazine* 93 (April 1985), 175–226.

7. *Work*, March 25 and April 8, 1939; Workers Alliance of America, "National Bulletin," March 24, 1939; see also March 11, 1939; both in Mathews Papers, Box 568; Hudson, "Black Workers of the Deep South Notebook," n.d., Hudson Papers, New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Box 3; Maxine Fain to Col. Harrington, March 20, 1939; Pike and Scott to Robert Ramspeck, March 9, 1939; Grace Darnell to Harrington, Feb. 20, 1939, and ca. Feb. 1939; Darnell to Tarver, n.d.; "Resolutions," Feb. 26, 1939; LeRoy Darnell to Eleanor Roosevelt, March 11, 1939; and Eskew to F. C. Harrington, March 9, 1939, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Boxes 1161, 1135; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 113; Ruth Thompson and William Hixon to Roosevelt, March 22, 1939, Roosevelt Papers, President's Official File 2366.

8. Hudson, "Black Workers of the Deep South Notebook"; Hudson Interview; *Atlanta Daily World*, March 18 and 23, 1939; Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 249–50.

9. Shepperson to R. G. Belote, April 13, 1939, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Box 1131.

10. Lasser to Fred R. Rauch, May 24 and June 14, 1939; Stevenson to Harrington, ca. July 1939; Stevenson to George, Russell, and Ramspeck, July 13, 1939; "200 Women WPA Employees Form Workers' Union," *Atlanta Journal*, May 5, 1939, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, States, Georgia 641–42, Box 1135. For an informed, more positive view of Stevenson, the Georgia Women's Democratic Club, and their accomplishments, see Hickey, " 'Lowest Form of Work Relief,' esp. 23–24.

11. *Atlanta Daily World*, May 7 and 9, 1939; FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, File 100–326.

12. Interview, Herbert Benjamin, Oct. 29, 1970, Draper Papers, Box 17; Benjamin to Sargent, Aug. 31, 1981, Folsom-Elting Collection, Box I; Lasser to Roosevelt, May 24, 1939, Roosevelt Papers, President's Official File 2366 and President's Personal File 7649; Benjamin to Theodore Draper, Nov. 17, 1970, and Draper Interview with Benjamin, Nov. 22, 1970, both in Draper Papers, Box 17; Klehr, 300.

13. Dunbar and Washburn Interviews, Living Atlanta Collection, Boxes 36, 39; Fain to Roosevelt, June 14, 1939, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161.

14. John Donovan, Testimony, *Executive Sessions of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations*, 83rd Cong., 1st sess., 2003, 1135 ff.; "Membership, Workers Alliance of America, by States, as of 1 April, 1939," in U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on Appropriations, *Investigation and Study of the Works Progress Administration*, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 37; for comment on the escalating disruption in the national Workers Alliance, see Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 242.

15. Shepperson to Corrington Gill (telegram), July 12, 1939; Shepperson to Rauch (telegrams), July 8, 10, and 17, 1939; Shepperson to John Carmody (tele-

gram), July 6, 1939, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640–41, Boxes 1131, 1135; Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 250–51; W. C. Roberts, "Memorandum for Mr. Green," AFL Papers, Box 2; for full discussion of the national strike wave of 1939, see Herman Erickson, "WPA Strike and Trials of 1939," *Minnesota History* 42 (Summer 1971): 202–14.

16. *Atlanta Daily World*, July 17 and 26, 1939; Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 251.

17. Benjamin to Scott, July 14 and 24, 1939, in FBI Report, Atlanta, March 23, 1942, File 100–326, Bulky Exhibits File; Shepperson to Rauch, July 21, 1939; Benjamin to Mr. Anderson (telegram), July 21, 1939, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1131.

18. Benjamin to Scott, July 14 and 24, 1939, in FBI Report, Atlanta, March 23, 1942, File 100–326, Bulky Exhibits File.

19. FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, Jan. 28, 1941.

20. "Brief Resume of WPA Accomplishments in Georgia," ca. April 1939; Carl Vinson to Shepperson, April 11, 1939, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia 610–11, Box 1124.

21. Lasser to Harrington, Aug. 9 and 18, 1939; Harrington to Lasser, Aug. 15, 1939, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, General 040, Box 61; see also *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept. 29, 1939.

22. Lasser to Dear _____, Aug. 8, 1939, FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, March 23, 1942, File 100–326, Bulky Items File.

23. *Atlanta Daily World*, Oct. 17, and Nov. 2 and 3, 1939; Esther Avery to Harrington, Oct. 26, 1939, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1135.

24. *Atlanta Daily World*, Oct. 28 and 29, 1939.

25. Harrington to Green, April 4, 1939; R. C. Ramsey to Green, March 17, 1939, both in AFL Papers, Box 2; W. M. Thomas to Williams, Jan. 2, 1939, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

26. *Work*, June 17 and Sept. 23, 1939.

27. *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept. 7 and July 23, 1939; *Work*, June 29 and July 15, 1939.

28. *Work*, June 29 and July 15, 1939; E. Luther Brookes to Harrington and Smith, June 4, 1939; Smith to Brookes, June 6, 1939, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 693.1, Box 1161; *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept. 7, 1939.

29. *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept. 7 and 12, 1939.

30. Albert W. Cox to Eleanor Roosevelt, Sept. 19, 1939; George H. Reese to Harrington, May 26, 1939; W. M. Lisle to Harrington, May 20, 1939, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

31. Shepperson to Rauch, August 1, 1939; Rauch to Benjamin, Aug. 14, 1939; Robert Wilson to Benjamin, Aug. 26 and ca. Aug., 1939; Benjamin to Rauch, June 29, 1939, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

32. Benjamin to Rauch, Sept. 7, 1939, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

33. Rauch to Cox, Oct. 3, 1939, and Cox to Eleanor Roosevelt, Sept. 19, 1939, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

34. "Committee Meeting with Workers Alliance in the Savannah Area Office, Saturday, Sept. 30, 1939," Report by John G. Wilkins Jr.; M. D. Inabinett and Joseph Smith to Alfred E. Smith, ca. Sept. 1939; Inabinett and Smith to Harrington, July 14, 1939, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia 641–42, Box 1135.

35. Benjamin to Rauch, December 21, 1939; Inabinett and Smith to Smith, Nov. 16 and Dec. 16, 1939, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

36. W. S. Scherffius to Inabinett, Dec. 8 and 12, 1939, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

37. Rauch to Benjamin, Jan. 8, 1940, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

38. Elizabeth Reasoner to Sophronia M. Tompkins, June 7, 1939; Tompkins to Eleanor Roosevelt, May 31, 1939, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 690, Box 1160.

39. Ernest L. Marbury to Joseph Smith, April 30, 1940; Wilkins to Inabinett, April 4, 1940; Inabinett and Smith to Alfred E. Smith, ca. Dec. 1939; Joseph Smith to Harrington, ca. April 1940, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

40. Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*, 272; Benjamin Interview, Draper Papers, Box 17; *New York Post*, Aug. 8, 1940. The institutionalization and bureaucratization of the Workers Alliance on the labor union model in the South is discussed in Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep South*, 75–76. The process on a national scale is fully explored in Piven and Cloward, 78–82, 86–87, 90–92; Goldberg, 353–55.

Chapter 9. The Crucible of War

1. *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Jan. 15, June 28, and July 19, 1940; Shepperson to Howard Hunter, Sept. 23, 1939; NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Box 1131; Georgia Department of Labor, Bureau of Unemployment Compensation, Report, in C. Paton to James J. Lorence, Aug. 13, 2007; Works Projects Administration of Georgia, "Employment on WPA State Program Projects by Race," Jan. 25 and Sept. 27, 1939, Raper Papers, Folder 3966; Bernstein, *Caring Society*, 277. For further discussion of lingering unemployment problems in the South, including Georgia, see Chamberlain, 26–27.

2. "Report of National Labor Secretary to NEC Meeting," Aug. 26, 1939; "Independent Groups Form New 'Workers Security Federation' of U.S.A. for Action against Unemployment," July 3, 1939, Special Labor Bulletin 10; "Recommen-

dations of Pittsburgh Conference on Socialist Party Unemployment Work," April 27, 1939; all in Socialist Party Papers, Roll 36; Benjamin, "End of the Alliance with Roosevelt," 1940, Folsom-Elting Collection, Box I; "Memorandum—Right to Work Congress, June 16, 1939, Draper Papers, Series 2.3, Reel 9; FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, Jan. 28, 1941.

3. Lasser to Malcolm Miller, Oct. 15 and 26, 1940, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135; FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, Jan. 28, 1941.

4. C. A. Strickland to Miller, Nov. 6, 1940, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

5. "Resolution," Local G-1123, Workers Alliance of America, Columbus, Ga., April 12, 1940, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135; FBI Report, "Workers Alliance," Atlanta, Georgia, Feb. 22, 1941, FBI File 100–326; see also "Workers Alliance of America," Savannah, March 19, 1941, FBI File 100–263; *Atlanta Daily World*, Feb. 20 and March 20, 1940.

6. Willie Jones et al. to Harrington, ca. Sept. 1940; Inabinett to Frank Ingram, Sept. 8, 1940; Inabinett to R. L McDougal, Sept. 29, 1940, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641–42, Box 1135.

7. Strickland to Rauch, Oct. 11, 1940; Strickland to Ingram, Oct. 18, 1940; Malcolm Miller to Ingram, Oct. 18, 1940; Ingram to Rauch, Sept. 16 and Oct. 4, 1940; Scherffius to Inabinett, Nov. 4, 1940, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia 641–42, Box 1135.

8. "Georgia WPA Ready for Wartime Duties," ca. Dec. 1941, Van de Vrede Papers, Box 1; "Report of Activities of the Workers' Service Project Having to Do with National Defense," May 12, 1941, Hilda Smith Papers, Box 14; Lasser to Roosevelt, Dec. 20, 1938, Roosevelt Papers, President's Official File 2366; "Summary of Reports of Employment and Economic Conditions," Jan. 1941, and "Monthly Report of Employment and Economic Conditions," Jan. 22, 1941, both in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Box 1132; Chamberlain, 26; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 114.

9. H. E. Harman Jr. to Howard O. Hunter, Nov. 26, 1941; Harman to Ernest L. Marbury, Aug. 4, 1941; "Monthly Report of Employment and Economic Conditions, Georgia," Aug. 9, 1941, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Box 1132; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 333.

10. Harman to Hunter, March 5, 1942, NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Box 1132.

11. Hunter to Harman, April 10, 1941; Harman to Lasser, March 12, 1941; John W. Gruse to Hunter, March 29, 1941, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 640, Box 1132.

12. FBI Report, "Southern Negro Youth Congress," Atlanta, Aug. 25, 1941, File 100–556 SMS; "Southern Negro Youth Congress," Birmingham, Ala., Oct. 13, 1942, File 100–82, both in Harvey Klehr Papers, Atlanta, Emory University Special Collections, Box 44; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 200–17; Egerton, 458–59; Klehr, 275–76.

13. SNYC, "Notes on Your Organization," in FBI Report, "Southern Negro Youth Congress," Atlanta, Sept. 24, 1941, File 100–556 BD, Klehr Papers, Box 44; Scott to the Editors, *North Georgia Review*, March 22, 1941, Lillian Smith Papers, Gainesville, University of Florida, George A. Smathers Library, Dept. of Special Collections, Box 11. The twists and turns in Scott's position mirrored the shifting Communist Party line in the period of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. These tortured arguments are discussed in Klehr, chap. 20, 410; Bellush and Bellush, 655–56; Samuel Walker, "Communists and Isolationism: The American Peace Mobilization, 1940–1941," *Maryland Historian* 4 (Spring-Summer 1973), 1–12.

14. *Macon Telegraph*, June 4, 1941; Harman to Miller, July 1, 1941; W. J. Trent to John Carmody, June 15, 1941, all in NA, RG 69, WPA Central Files, State Series, Georgia, 641, Box 1135; Holmes, *New Deal in Georgia*, 114.

15. *Macon News*, June 5, 1941; *Macon Telegraph*, June 5 and July 6, 7, and 12, 1941.

16. John P. Davis, "The Negro in the Labor Struggles of the New Deal," n.d., Guy Benton Johnson Papers, Folder 3826; Interview with Nat Ross, March 29, 1969, Draper Papers, Box 15; Ferguson, 160–61.

17. Quoted in Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 158; Hudson Interview; see also Hudson, "Black Workers of the Deep South Notebook," Hudson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Box 3; Klehr, 298–99.

Bibliography

Manuscripts and Archives

Frank T. Adams Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison; AFL Presidents File, William Green Papers, George Meany Memorial Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland; AFL-CIO Region 8 Papers, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Southern Labor Archives, Atlanta; James S. Allen Papers, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library; American Civil Liberties Union Papers (Microfilm), Princeton University, Seeley Mudd Library, Princeton, New Jersey; American Federation of Labor Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison; Atlanta Police Department Papers, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Atlanta University Presidential Records, John Hope Records, Atlanta University Center Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Georgia; Atlanta Urban League Papers, Atlanta University Center Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Georgia; Mary Barker Papers, Emory University Special Collections, Atlanta, Georgia; Herbert Benjamin Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington, D.C.; Berry College Archives, Rome, Georgia; Chicopee Oral History Project Files, Gainesville State College, John Harrison Hosch Library, Georgia; Commission on Interracial Cooperation Papers, Atlanta University Center Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Georgia; Communist Party U.S.A. Collection (Reference Center for Marxist Studies Files), Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library; Paul Crouch Papers, Stanford University, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace Archives, California; Samuel Darcy Papers, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library; Benjamin Davis Jr. Papers, Reference Center for

Marxist Studies, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library; Francis G. Dillon Papers, Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, Michigan; James A. Dombrowski Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison; Theodore Draper Papers, Emory University Special Collections, Atlanta, Georgia; Theodore Dreiser Papers, University of Pennsylvania, Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Virginia Durr Papers, Alabama Archives, Montgomery; Katherine Pollock Ellickson Papers, Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, Michigan; Federal Writers Project Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections; Folsom-Elting Collection, University of Colorado Archives, Boulder; Frank Porter Graham Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections; Paul Green Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections; Hilton Hanna Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison; Lamartine Hardman Papers, University of Georgia Libraries, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens; Lement Harris Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department, Iowa City; Lorena Hickok Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York; Highlander Folk School Collection (Microfilm), Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville; Highlander Research and Education Center Archives, Highlander Research and Education Center, New Market, Tennessee; Highlander Research and Education Center Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison; Harry Hopkins Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York; Myles Horton Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison; Hosea Hudson Papers, New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Hosea Hudson Papers, Reference Center for Marxist Studies, New York University, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library; Hosea Hudson Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections; International Labor Defense Papers (Microfilm), New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Gardner Jackson Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York; Arnold Johnson Papers, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library; Clyde Johnson Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections; Guy Benton Johnson Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections; Stetson Kennedy Papers, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Southern Labor Archives, Atlanta; Stetson Kennedy Papers, New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Howard Anderson Kester Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections; Harvey Klehr Papers, Emory University Special Collections, Atlanta, Georgia; John Howard Lawson Papers, Southern Illinois University Library Special Collections, Carbondale; Robert and Margaret MacDougal

Papers, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Lucy Randolph Mason Papers (Microfilm), Duke University, Perkins Library Special Collections, Durham, North Carolina; J. B. Matthews Papers, Duke University, Perkins Library Special Collections, Durham, North Carolina; Ralph McGill Papers, Emory University Special Collections, Atlanta, Georgia; Clarina Michelson Papers, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library; Mary Raoul Millis Papers (Raoul Family Papers), Emory University Special Collections, Atlanta, Georgia; George S. Mitchell Papers, Duke University, Perkins Library Special Collections, Durham, North Carolina; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers (Originals and Microfilm) Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington, D.C.; National Urban League Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington, D.C.; Neighborhood Union Papers, Atlanta University Center Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Georgia; Pamphlet Files, Reference Center for Marxist Studies, New York University, Tamiment Institute Library, Elmer Bobst Library); President's Organization for Unemployment Relief/President's Emergency Committee for Employment (POUR/PECE) Collection, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; Glenn Rainey Papers, Emory University Special Collections, Atlanta, Georgia; Arthur Franklin Raper Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections; Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, President's Official File and President's Personal File, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York; Mike Ross Papers, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Southern Labor Archives, Atlanta; Richard B. Russell Papers, University of Georgia Libraries, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens; Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, Communist Party of the USA Records (Microfilm), Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington, D.C.; John Nevin Sayre Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore College Library, Pennsylvania; Gay Bolling Shepperson Papers, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Henry P. Slaughter Papers, Atlanta University Center Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Georgia; George Sloan Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison; Hilda Smith Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York; Lillian Smith Papers, University of Florida, George A. Smathers Library, Department of Special Collections, Gainesville; Socialist Party of America Papers (Microfilm), Duke University, Perkins Library Special Collections, Durham, North Carolina; Mark Solomon and Robert Kaufman Papers, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library; Southern Conference for Human Welfare Papers, Atlanta University Center Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Georgia; Southern Conference for Human Welfare Papers, Tuskegee University Archives, Alabama; Southern Tenant Farmers Union Papers (Originals and Microfilm), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections; Eugene Talmadge Papers, University of Georgia Libraries, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens; Alva W. Taylor Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville,

Tennessee; Textile Workers Union of America Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison; United Textile Workers of America Papers, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Southern Labor Archives, Atlanta; Don West File, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Don West Scrapbook (Ann West Williams Collection), Private Collection, Charleston, West Virginia; Hedy West and Don West Papers (see also Jeff Biggers Collection), University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Athens; Aubrey Williams Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York; Claude Williams Papers, Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, Michigan; John Winant Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York; Robert W. Woodruff Papers, Emory University Special Collections, Atlanta, Georgia; C. Vann Woodward Papers, Yale University, Sterling Memorial Library, Department of Special Collections, New Haven, Connecticut; Works Progress Administration (WPA) Papers, University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Athens.

Interviews

Frank T. Adams, interview by author; Solomon Barkin, Wisconsin Historical Society, TWUA Papers, Madison; Marion "Peanut" Brown, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Uprising of '34 Collection, Pullen Library, Atlanta; Nellie Bryant, Living Atlanta Oral History Collection, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Clara Mae Cagle, Chicopee Oral History Project, John Harrison Hosch Library, Gainesville State College, Georgia; William Terry Couch, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Southern Oral History Collection; Ruby Dollar, University of Georgia, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Athens; Augusta Dunbar, Living Atlanta Oral History Collection, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Arthur Duncan, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Uprising of '34 Collection, Pullen Library, Atlanta; James A. Dunlap, Chicopee Oral History Project, John Harrison Hosch Library, Gainesville State College, Georgia; Irene Brooks Elders, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Uprising of '34 Collection, Pullen Library, Atlanta; Frank Porter Graham, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Southern Oral History Collection; Effie Gray, Living Atlanta Oral History Collection, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Paul Green, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Southern Oral History Collection; Joe D. Holcomb, Chicopee Oral History Project, John Harrison Hosch Library, Gainesville State College, Georgia; Myles Horton, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison; Hosea Hudson, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Southern Oral History Collection; Joseph Jacobs, Georgia State University, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Southern Labor Archives, Pullen Library, Atlanta; Joseph Jacobs, Georgia State University, Pullen Library, Uprising of '34 Collection, Atlanta; Clyde Johnson, University of North Carolina at

Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Southern Oral History Collection; Stetson Kennedy, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Pullen Library, Atlanta; L. T. Medley, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Uprising of '34 Collection, Pullen Library, Atlanta; Al Murphy, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Southern Oral History Collection; Oral History of the American Left Collection, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, Elmer Bobst Library; Homer L. Pike, Federal Writers Project Papers, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Wilson Library Special Collections, Southern Historical Collection; Glenn Rainey, Emory University, Georgia; Arthur Raper, Living Atlanta Oral History Collection, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Etta Robbins, University of Georgia, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Athens; Mike Ross, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Pullen Library, Atlanta; C. Smith, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Uprising of '34 Collection, Pullen Library, Atlanta; Wilma Van Dusseldorp, Living Atlanta Oral History Collection, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Nannie Leah Washburn, Living Atlanta Oral History Collection, Atlanta History Center, Georgia; Nannie Leah Washburn, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Uprising of '34 Collection, Pullen Library; Don West, Highlander Research and Education Center, New Market, Tennessee; Don West, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Southern Oral History Collection; Don West (by Alex Baskin), University of Georgia, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library; Don West (by Hedy West), University of Georgia, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library; Hedy West, interview by author; Ann West Williams, interview by author; Joe T. Wood, Chicopee Oral History Project, John Harrison Hosch Library, Gainesville State College, Georgia; Bill Woodham, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Uprising of '34 Collection, Pullen Library, Atlanta; C. Vann Woodward, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Southern Oral History Collection; Etta Mae Zimmerman, Georgia State University, Southern Labor Archives, Uprising of '34 Collection, Pullen Library, Atlanta.

Author's Correspondence

Lement Harris, 2003–2004
C. Paton, 2007
Hedy West, 2003–2005
Ann West Williams, 2004–2005

Journals, Newspapers, and Magazines

Atlanta Daily World, 1929–1941
Atlanta Journal of Labor, 1930–1936
Boston Sunday Advertiser, 1936
Commonwealth, 1934

Daily Worker, 1929–1960
Gainesville (Georgia) Times, 1934–1935
Huntsville (Alabama) Times, 1938
Labor Defender, 1930–1938
Labor Unity, 1932–1934
Macon Telegraph, 1932–1941
Negro Digest, 1940
Negro *Liberator*, 1930–1934
Party Organizer, 1929–1941
Peoples Press, 1935–1937
Southern Worker, 1930–1937
The Unemployed, 1930–1932
Washington Tribune, 1935
Work, 1938–1940
The Workers Alliance, 1935–1936

Government Documents

Highlander Folk School, File 61–7511, Tennessee State Library, Nashville, FBI Records Obtained through Freedom of Information Act Request; Rhoda Kaufman Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Morrow, Georgia; National Archives, Southeast Region, Atlanta, Georgia Record Group 9, Records of the NRA; National Archives, Southeast Region, Atlanta, Record Group 96, Records of the Farmers Home Administration; National Archives, Washington, D.C. Record Group 9, Records of the NRA, Entry 402, Records of the Textile Labor Relations Board, Records Relating to Labor Disturbances in the Textile Industry, 1933–1937; National Archives, Washington, D.C., Record Group 69, Records of Works Projects Administration and Predecessors; E. D. Rivers, Governor's Correspondence Subject Files, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Morrow, Georgia; Eugene Talmadge, Governor's Correspondence Subject Files, Georgia Department of Archives, and History, Morrow, Georgia; U.S. Congress, House Committee on Un-American Activities, *Communism in the Mid-South: Hearings*, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 1958; U.S. Congress, House Special Committee on Communist Activities in the United States, *Investigation of Communist Propaganda*, 71st Cong., 2nd sess., 1930; U.S. Congress, House Subcommittee on Appropriations, *Investigation and Study of the Works Progress Administration*, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 1939; U.S. Congress, Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations, *Executive Sessions*, 83rd Cong., 1st sess., 2003; U.S. Department of the Army, *U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917–1941* (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1984); U.S. Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Unemployment*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931); Jane Van de Vrede Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Morrow, Georgia; Donald

Lee West, File 100–20396, FBI Records Obtained through Freedom of Information Act Request; Workers Alliance of America, File 61–7586, FBI Records Obtained through Freedom of Information Act Request; Workers Alliance of Georgia, File 100–326, FBI Records Obtained through Freedom of Information Act Request.

Books, Articles, Theses, Dissertations, and Other Sources

A. Steve Nance: Labor Statesman and Citizen. Atlanta: Ruralist Press, 1938 (Microfilm).

Adams, Frank T. *James A. Dombrowski: An American Heretic, 1897–1983*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992.

Adams, Frank T., with Myles Horton. *Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander*. Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 1975.

Allen, James S. *Organizing in the Depression South: A Communist's Memoir*. Minneapolis: MEP, 2001.

Allen, John E. "Eugene Talmadge and the Great Textile Strike in Georgia, September 1934." In *Essays in Southern Labor History: Selected Papers, Southern Labor History Conference, 1976*, ed. Gary M. Fink and Merl E. Reed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977.

Anderson, William. *The Wild Man from Sugar Creek: The Political Career of Eugene Talmadge*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975.

Auerbach, Jerold. "Southern Tenant Farmers: Critics of the New Deal." *Labor History* 7 (Winter 1966): 3–18.

Bartley, Numan V. *The Creation of Modern Georgia*. 2nd ed. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990.

Bauman, John F., and Thomas H. Coode. *In the Eye of the Great Depression: New Deal Reporters and the Agony of the American People*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988.

Bayor, Ronald. *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Bellush, Bernard, and Jewel Bellush. "A Radical Response to the Roosevelt Presidency: The Communist Party (1933–1945)." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 10 (Dec. 1980): 645–61.

Bernstein, Irving. *A Caring Society: The New Deal, the Worker, and the Great Depression*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1985.

———. *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920–1933*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1960.

———. *Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933–1941*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1971.

Biles, Roger. *The South and the New Deal*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994.

Blackwelder, Julie Kirk. *Women of the Depression: Caste and Culture in San Antonio, 1929–1939*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1984.

Brattain, Michelle. *The Politics of Whiteness: Race, Workers, and Culture in the Modern South*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001.
Brueggemann, John. "Racial Considerations and Social Policy in the 1930s: Economic Change and Political Opportunities." *Social Science History* 26 (Spring 2002): 139–77.
Bucknam, Kathie. "Don West: Peripatetic Educator of the Appalachian South." Seminar Paper, 2004, History, Henderson State University.
Byerly, Victoria Morris. " 'What Shall a Poet Sing'? The Living Struggle of the Poet and Revolutionary Don West." Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 1994.
Carter, Dan. *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969.
Chamberlain, Charles D. *Victory at Home: Manpower and Race in the American South during World War II*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.
Chambliss, Rollin. "What Negro Newspapers of Georgia Say about Some Social Problems, 1933." MA thesis, University of Georgia, 1934.
Cobb, James C. *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
Cobb, James C., and Michael V. Namorato, eds. *The New Deal and the South*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984.
Cohen, Lizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
Coode, Thomas H. "Georgia Congressmen and the First Hundred Days of the New Deal." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 53 (June 1969): 129–46.
Craig, Robert H. *Religion and Radical Politics: An Alternative Christian Tradition in the United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.
Daniel, Pete. *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South, 1901–1969*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972.
Davis, Benjamin. *Communist Councilman from Harlem*. New York: International, 1969.
Dickey, Ovida, and Doyle Mathis. *Berry College: A History*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.
———. "History of Martha Berry College." Archives, Berry College.
Draper, Theodore. *Roots of American Communism*. New York: Viking, 1957.
Dunbar, Anthony. *Against the Grain: Southern Radicals and Prophets, 1929–1959*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981.
Dykeman, Wilma, and James Stokely. *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
Dyson, Lowell K. *Red Harvest: The Communist Party and American Farmers*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.
———. "The Southern Tenant Farmers Union and Depression Politics." *Political Science Quarterly* 88 (June 1973): 230–52.
Egerton, John. *Speak Now against the Day: The Generation before the Civil*

Rights Movement in the South. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
Erickson, Herman. "WPA Strike and Trials of 1939." *Minnesota History* 42 (Summer 1971): 202–14.
Eskew, Glenn T., ed. *Labor in the Modern South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002.
Fannin, Mark. *Labor's Promised Land: Radical Visions of Gender, Race, and Religion in the South*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003.
Ferguson, Karen. *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
Fink, Gary B. *The Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill Strike of 1914–1915: Espionage, Labor Conflict, and New South Industrial Relations*. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 1993.
Fink, Gary B., and Merl E. Reed, eds. *Essays in Southern Labor History: Selected Papers: Southern Labor History Conference, 1976*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976.
Flamming, Douglas. *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884–1984*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
Fleming, Douglas Lee. "Atlanta, the Depression, and the New Deal." Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1984.
———. "The New Deal in Atlanta: A Review of the Major Programs." *Atlanta Historical Journal* 30 (Spring 1986): 23–45.
Folsom, Franklin. *Impatient Armies of the Poor: The Story of Collective Action of the Unemployed, 1808–1942*. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1996.
Garraty, John A. "Unemployment during the Great Depression." *Labor History* 17 (Spring 1976): 139–59.
Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008.
Glen, John M. *Highlander: No Ordinary School, 1932–1962*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988.
Godden, Richard, and Martin Crawford, eds. *Reading Southern Poverty between the Wars, 1918–1939*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006.
Goldberg, Chad Allen. "Contesting the Status of Relief Workers during the New Deal: The Workers Alliance of America and the WPA, 1935–1941." *Social Science History* 29 (Fall 2005): 337–71.
Goldfield, David R. "The Urban South: A Regional Framework." *American Historical Review* 86 (Dec. 1981): 1009–34.
Grant, Donald L. *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia*. Secaucus, N.J.: Carol, 1993.
Green, Chris. "The Social Life of Poetry: Pluralism and Appalachia, 1937–1948." Ph.D diss., University of Kentucky, 2004.

Green, Chris, Rachel Rubin, and James Smethurst, eds. *Radicalism in the South*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006.
Green, Elna C., ed. *The New Deal and Beyond: Social Welfare in the South since 1930*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.
Green, James R. *Grass Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895–1943*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978.
———. "Working Class Militancy in the Depression." *Radical America* 6 (Nov.–Dec. 1972): 1–36.
———. *The World of the Worker: Labor in Twentieth Century America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1980.
Griffith, Barbara. *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988.
Grubbs, Donald. *Cry from the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers Union and the New Deal*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971.
Guthrie, Carol Anne. "Education and the Evolution of the South: A History of the Berry Schools, 1902–1970." Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1994.
Hall, Jacqueline Dowd. "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South." *Journal of American History* 73 (Sept. 1986): 354–82.
———. "Private Eyes, Public Women: Images of Class and Sex in the Urban South, Atlanta, Georgia, 1913–1915." In *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor*, ed. Eva Baron, 243–72. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991.
Hall, Jacqueline Dowd, et al. *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987.
Harris, Lement. *My Tale of Two Worlds*. New York: International, 1986.
Heale, M. J. *McCarthy's Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935–1965*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998.
Herndon, Angelo. *Let Me Live*. 1937. Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969.
———. *You Cannot Kill the Working Class*. New York: International Labor Defense and League of Struggle for Negro Rights, ca. 1934.
Hickey, Georgina. *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890–1940*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.
———. " 'The Lowest Form of Work Relief': Authority, Gender, and the State in Atlanta's Sewing Rooms." In *The New Deal and Beyond: Social Welfare in the South since 1930*, ed. Elna C. Green, 3–26. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.
Hodges, James A. *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986.
Holmes, Michael S. "The Blue Eagle as 'Jim Crow Bird': The NRA and Georgia's Black Workers." *Journal of Negro History* 57 (July 1972): 276–83.
———. *The New Deal in Georgia: An Administrative History*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975.

Honey, Michael. *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
Hopkins, Harry L. *Spending to Save: The Complete Story of Relief*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1936.
Horne, Gerald. *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994.
Horton, Aimee Isgrig. *The Highlander Folk School: A History of Its Major Programs*. Brooklyn: Carlson, 1989.
Horton, Myles. *The Long Haul: An Autobiography*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1998.
Howard, Donald S. *The WPA and Federal Relief Policy*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1943.
Hudson, Hosea. *Black Worker in the Deep South: A Personal Record*. New York: International, 1972.
Hunter, Tera W. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.
Inscoe, John C. "'All Manner of Defeated, Shiftless, Shifty, Pathetic, and Interesting Good People': Autobiographical Encounters with Southern Poverty." In *Reading Southern Poverty between the Wars, 1918–1939*, ed. Richard Godden and Martin Crawford, 145–62. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006.
———, ed. *Georgia in Black and White: Explorations in the Race Relations of a Southern State, 1865–1950*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994.
Irons, Janet. *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
Jamieson, Stuart Marshall. *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture*. Dept. of Labor, Bulletin no. 836. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1945.
Johnson, Charles S., et al. *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935.
Johnson, Tom. *The Reds in Dixie: Who Are the Communists and What Do They Stand For in the South*. New York: Workers Library, ca. 1935.
Jones, Jacqueline. *The Dispossessed: America's Underclass from the Civil War to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.
Kahn, Eleanor. "Organizations of Unemployed Workers as a Factor in the American Labor Movement." MA thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1934.
Kelley, Robin D. G. *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
———. "A Lifelong Radical: Clyde Johnson, 1908–1994." *Radical History Review* 62 (Spring 1995): 254–58.
———. "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Activism in the Jim Crow South." *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993): 75–112.

Kester, Howard. *Revolt among the Sharecroppers*. New York: Covici-Friede, 1936.
Kirby, Jack Temple. *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920–1960*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987.
Klehr, Harvey. *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade*. New York: Basic Books, 1984.
Klehr, Harvey, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, eds. *The Secret World Of American Communism*. Trans. Timothy D. Sergay. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995.
Kornbluh, Joyce L . *A New Deal for Workers' Education: The Workers Service Program, 1933–1942*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
Krueger, Thomas A. *And Promises to Keep: The Southern Conference for Human Welfare, 1938–1948*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967.
Kuhn, Clifford M. *Contesting the New South Order: The 1914–1915 Strike at Atlanta's Fulton Mills*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
Kuhn, Clifford M., Harlon E. Joye, and E. Bernard West. *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914–1948*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990.
Lawson, John Howard. *A Southern Welcome*. New York: National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, 1934.
Leab, Daniel J. "United We Eat: The Creation and Organization of the Unemployed Councils in 1930." *Labor History* 8 (Fall 1967): 300–15.
Leibman, Wilma. "The Workers Alliance of America: The Organization of Relief Recipients." Senior thesis, Barnard College, 1971.
Leiter, Jeffrey, Michael D. Schulman, and Rhonda Zingraff, eds. *Hanging by a Thread: Social Change in Southern Textiles*. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 1991.
Levenstein, Harvey A. *Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.
Lewis, George. *The White South and the Red Menace: Segregationists, Anticommunism, and Massive Resistance, 1945–1965*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004.
Lorence, James J. *A Hard Journey: The Life of Don West*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.
———. *Organizing the Unemployed: Community and Union Activists in the Industrial Heartland*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
———. "The Workers of Chicopee: Progressive Paternalism and the Culture of Accommodation in a Modern Mill Village." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 91 (Fall 2007): 292–323.
Lowitt, Richard, and Maureen Beaseley, eds. *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
Marshall, F. Ray. *Labor in the South*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967.

Martin, Charles H. *The Angelo Herndon Case and Southern Justice*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976.
———. "Communists and Blacks: The ILD and the Angelo Herndon Case." *Journal of Negro History* 64 (Winter 1979): 131–41.
———."The International Labor Defense and Black America." *Labor History* 26 (Spring 1985): 165–94.
———. "White Supremacy and Black Workers: Georgia's 'Black Shirts' Combat the Great Depression." *Labor History* 18 (Summer 1977): 366–80.
Martin, Robert F. *Howard Kester and the Struggle for Social Justice in the South*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991.
Mason, Lucy Randolph. *To Win These Rights: A Personal Story of the CIO in the South*. New York: Harper, 1952.
McJimsey, George. *Harry Hopkins: Ally of the Poor and Defender of Democracy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.
McLaurin, Melton Alonza. *Paternalism and Protest: Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Organized Labor, 1875–1905*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971.
McMillan, Neil R., ed. *Remaking Dixie: The Impact of World War II on the American South*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997.
Mertz, Paul E. *New Deal Policy and Southern Rural Poverty*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978.
Mitchell, Harry L. *Mean Things Happening in This Land: The Life and Times of H. L. Mitchell, Cofounder of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union*. Montclair, N.J.: Allenheld, Osmun, 1979.
Montgomery, David, and Ronald Schatz. "Facing Layoffs." In *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles*, ed. David Montgomery, 139–49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
Moore, John Hammond. "Communists and Fascists in a Southern City: Atlanta, 1930." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 67 (Summer 1968): 437–54.
Naison, Mark. *Communists in Harlem during the Great Depression*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
Nelson, Daniel. *Unemployment Insurance: The American Experience*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969.
Newman, Joseph W. "Mary C. Barker and the Atlanta Teachers' Union." In *Southern Workers and Their Unions, 1880–1975: Selected Papers, the Second Southern Labor History Conference, 1978*, ed. Merl E. Reed, Leslie S. Hough, and Gary M. Fink, 60–77. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978.
Ottanelli, Fraser. *The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
Painter, Nell Irvin, ed. *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: The Life and Times of a Black Radical*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1979.

Patton, Randall L., with David B. Parker. *Carpet Capital: The Rise of a New South Industry*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999.
Piven, Frances Fox, and Richard A. Cloward. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Pantheon, 1977.
Prago, Albert. "The Organization of the Unemployed and the Role of the Radicals, 1929–1935." Ph.D. diss., Union Graduate School, 1976.
Raper, Arthur F. *Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936.
Raper, Arthur F., and Ira DeA. Reid. *Sharecroppers All*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941.
Record, Wilson. *Race and Radicalism: The NAACP and the Communist Party in Conflict*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964.
Reed, Linda. *Simple Decency and Common Sense: The Southern Conference Movement, 1938–1963*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
Reed, Merl E., Leslie S. Hough, and Gary M. Fink, eds. *Southern Workers and Their Unions, 1880–1975: Selected Papers, the Second Southern Labor History Conference, 1978*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978.
Rolinson, Mary G. *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920–1927*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
Rosengarten, Theodore. *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*. New York: Vintage, 1984.
Rosenzweig, Roy. "Organizing the Unemployed: The Early Years of the Great Depression, 1929–1933." *Radical America* 10 (July–Aug. 1976): 37–61.
———. "Socialism in Our Time: The Socialist Party and the Unemployed, 1919–1936." *Labor History* 20 (Fall 1979): 485–509.
Salmond, John A. "The Burlington Dynamite Plot: The 1934 Textile Strike and Its Aftermath in Burlington, N.C." *North Carolina History Review* 75 (Oct. 1998): 393–434.
———. *The General Textile Strike of 1934: From Maine to Alabama*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002.
———. *Miss Lucy of the CIO: The Life and Times of Lucy Randolph Mason*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988.
———. *A Southern Rebel: The Life and Times of Aubrey Willis Williams*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.
Sargent, James E. "Roosevelt, Lasser, and the Workers Alliance: Organizing WPA Workers and the Unemployed, 1935–1940." Paper presented at the Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, April 1982, Philadelphia.
———. "Woodrum's Economy Bloc." *Virginia Magazine* 93 (April 1985): 175–226.
Schwartz, Bonnie Fox. *The Civil Works Administration, 1933–1934: The Business of Emergency Employment in the New Deal*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990.
Seymour, Helen. "The Organized Unemployed." MA thesis, University of Chicago, 1937.
Simon, Bryant. "Choosing between the Ham and the Union: Paternalism in the Cone Mills of Greensboro, 1925–1930." In *Hanging by a Thread: Social Change in Southern Textiles*, ed. Jeffrey Leiter, Michael D. Schulman, and Rhonda Zingraff, 81–100. Ithaca: ILR Press, 1991.
———. *A Fabric of Defeat: The Politics of South Carolina Millhands, 1910–1948*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
Sitkoff, Harvard. *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
Smith, Douglas L. *The New Deal in the Urban South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988.
Solomon, Mark. *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917–1936*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998.
———. *Red and Black: Communism and Afro-Americans, 1929–1935*. New York: Garland, 1988.
Sternsher, Bernard. *Hitting Home: The Great Depression in Town and Country*. Rev. ed. Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1989.
Storch, Randi. " 'The Realities of the Situation': Revolutionary Discipline and Everyday Political Life in Chicago's Communist Party, 1928–1935." *Labor: Studies in Working Class Histories of the Americas* 1 (Fall 2004): 19–44.
Sullivan, Patricia. *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
Tindall, George B. *The Emergence of the New South, 1913–1945*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967.
Tribble, Edwin. "Blackshirts in Georgia." *New Republic*, Oct. 8, 1930, 205.
Tuck, Stephen N. *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940–1980*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001.
United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA). "Summary Report," 1939.
Valocci, Steve, "The Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1930s: A Reexamination of the Piven and Cloward Thesis." *Social Problems* 37 (May 1990): 191–205.
Waldrep, G. C., III. *Southern Workers and the Search for Community: Spartanburg County, South Carolina*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
Walker, Forrest A. *The Civil Works Administration: An Experiment in Federal Work Relief, 1933–1934*. New York: Garland, 1979.
Walker, Samuel. "Communists and Isolationism: The American Peace Mobilization, 1940–1941." *Maryland Historian* 4 (Spring–Summer 1973): 1–12.

Warren, Wallace Hugh. "Progress and Its Discontents: The Transformation of the Georgia Foothills, 1920–1970." MA thesis, University of Georgia, 1997.
West, Don. "Georgia Wanted Me: Dead or Alive," *New Masses*, June 26, 1934, 15–16.
———. *Don West: No Lonesome Road: Selected Poems and Prose*. Ed. Jeff Biggers and George Brosi. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.
———. "Slavery Returns to Georgia," *Negro Digest*, Sept.–Oct. 1940, 4–9.
Wiggenton, Eliot. *Refuse to Stand Idly By: An Oral History of Grass Roots Social Activism in America, 1921–1964*. New York: Doubleday, 1991.
Wilson, Walter. "Atlanta's Communists." *Nation* 133 (June 25, 1930): 730–31.
Wingerd, Mary Lethert. "Rethinking Paternalism: Power and Parochialism in a Southern Mill Village." *Journal of American History* 83 (Dec. 1996): 872–902.
Wolters, Raymond. *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970.
Woodward, C. Vann. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
Zieger, Robert H., ed. *Organized Labor in the Twentieth Century South*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991.

Index

ACLU. *See* American Civil Liberties Union
Adams, Sue, 182, 187
AFL. *See* American Federation of Labor
African Americans, 3, 227, 229–30; AFL exclusion of, 10, 134; assigned to unskilled relief labor, 133, 135, 149, 150–51; attitudes of, toward Communism, 5, 23, 25, 30, 108, 120, 136, 146, 167–68; Black Shirt desire for exclusion of, 19, 40; churches of, 9–10, 64; as CPUSA members, 4, 26, 85, 117, 121; as domestic labor, 148, 149; effort to use, as scab labor, 73, 96; and Herndon defense, 49, 138; impact of unemployment on, 18–19, 203, 204, 211, 220; as labor competition for whites, 40, 73; migration of, 73–74; militancy of, 2, 18, 57, 66, 227, 231; in rural areas, 23, 63–64, 73–74, 151–52, 168–69, 184, 185; textile mill hiring policies toward, 10, 105; and unions, 10, 134, 221, 222, 230; in urban areas, 2, 74; and Workers Alliance, 10, 12, 179–86 passim, 203–16 passim, 222, 229–30; and WPA, 134, 135, 149, 150, 170, 205, 208–18. *See also* churches, black; middle class: African American; race
Alabama Communist Party, 180, 220
Alexander, Will, 26; on Black Shirts, 40; and CIC, 24, 23, 56; on Communist Party's limited growth, 24, 56–57, 65–66; opposition of, to insurrection law, 36; on tenancy's future, 66
Allen, James, 24, 68
Alling, Mrs. R. W., 117, 120, 121
All-Southern Conference for Civil and Trade Union Rights, 1935: attendees at, 140; Highlander role in, 139, 141; origins of, 139–40; and Popular Front, 140
All-Southern Conference of WPA Workers, 1939, 193–94

All Southern WPA Workers Conference, 1935, 141–42, 143, 144
Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACW), 140, 174
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): and Atlanta Six, 34, 36–37; and Communists, 34; and ILD, 34; protests peonage, 151; southern campaign of 1934 launched by, 119
American Federation of Labor (AFL), 87; CIO unions expelled by, 155; Herndon supported by, 50; national leadership of, 92, 93; and prevailing wage, 94, 129, 147, 166, 199; and Socialist Party of Georgia, 5; southern organizing drive of (1930), 34–35; and unemployed workers, 4, 7, 41, 92–93, 129, 162, 214; and unemployment insurance, 41, 92; and Workers Alliance, 204; on work relief, 173; and WPA, 129, 147–48, 199–200, 214, 221–22
American Federation of Teachers, 35
American Legion, 119, 140, 154, 167
American Security Union, 215, 219–20
anticommunism: among Georgia officials, 13, 59, 117–19; in labor unions, 35; and racial attitudes, 98–99; as response to unemployed movement, 6. *See also* Red scare of 1934
Atlanta: Black Shirts in, 19; Communism's growth in, 25–27; as focus of unemployed movement, 18, 30–32; unemployment in, 18
Atlanta Better Business Bureau, 20, 215
Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, 20, 64
Atlanta Community Chest, 22, 43
Atlanta Daily World, 51, 53, 65, 66, 82, 84, 133, 134–35, 195, 200, 203, 205, 216
Atlanta Federation of Building Trades: Atlanta Six prosecution opposed by, 36; and Communist Party gains, concern over, 40; and federal relief, attitude toward, 94, 166; and WPA, 147
Atlanta Journal of Labor, 35, 41, 83, 106, 119, 128, 132, 133, 214
"Atlanta Six," 19; liberal support for, 36; prosecution of, 32, 35, 36, 58
Atlanta Women's Democratic Club: elite perspective of, 148, 196; and organization of unemployed, 196
Augusta, 8, 34; as Populist stronghold, 24; in textile strike of 1934, 102; Workers Alliance in, 215

back-to-the land movement, 20, 64–65, 74
Barbour, Joan, 49
Barker, Mary: on Atlanta Six, 35; and Workers Education Program, 95, 98
Barkin, Solomon, 125
Benjamin, Herbert, 142, 181, 197, 209; on decline of Workers Alliance, 190; and Georgia Workers Alliance, 184, 206; Red-baited in Congress, 201–2; resigns as secretary of Workers Alliance, 211; on "unemployables," 190, 215; on wage hike for WPA workers (1938), 178–79; on Workers Alliance as mass movement, 178–79, 215
Benson, Syd, 73
Bernstein, Hilliard, 143, 144
Bibb County, Ga.: "bull pen" hiring practices in, 221; organization of Hod Carriers Union in, 221; WPA in, 152, 153, 169–70, 221–22
Birmingham, Ala.: African American community in, 2; as District 17 headquarters, 180; Workers Alliance in, 2, 195
Black Belt: Communist Party's focus on, 4, 23, 60, 64, 77; Garveyism in, 68; rural organizing in, 23, 61

Blacks. *See* African Americans
Black Shirts: and African American job displacement, 19, 38–39; Communist attack on, 40; decline of, 39–40; effort of, to expand beyond Atlanta, 39; program of, 38–39; and racial tension, 40
boosterism, 20–21, 22
Boozer, Bertha, 220
Boykin, John A., 118, 120
Brady, Gilmer (Herbert Newton), 31, 35
Brenau University, 119
Browder, Earl, 159, 211
Brown, Marion "Peanut," 102, 115, 128–29
Brunswick, Ga., 179, 215
Burlak, Ann, 31, 35
Butler Street YMCA, 196

Cagle, Clara Mae, 124
Caldwell, Erskine, 16
Camp, Lawrence, 187
Camp Hill, Ala., shootout, 62, 63
Carr, Joseph, 30
Chatham County: African American women on projects in, 208, 210; appeal to Eleanor Roosevelt from, 210; discrimination against African American unemployed in, 208–11, 217; and WPA corruption allegations, 210
Chattanooga, Tenn., 139, 140, 141, 143, 162, 163, 222
Chicopee Manufacturing Co.: evictions by, 124; labor crisis (1934–35), 109, 124; outcome of conflict at, 124–25; union inroads into, 125
churches, black, 9–10, 64, 82, 118
CIC. *See* Commission on Interracial Cooperation
CIO. *See* Congress of Industrial Organizations
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), 89, 116
Civil Rights movement: in future, 231; unemployed movement's influence on, 230–31
Civil Works Administration (CWA): allegations of discrimination by, 76, 90–92; community attitudes toward, 76, 87, 88, 89–90, 92; creation of, 83; economic impact of, 6, 88, 92; labor relations of, 92; termination of, 88, 89–90, 98; union view of, 83; wage scale of, 83, 87–88, 94; worker response to, 76, 87
class consciousness, 12, 14, 40, 59, 63, 73, 175, 223
class unity, impediments to, 12, 13, 58–59, 95, 96
clergy, African American: and back-to-the-land movement, 64; and unemployed movement, 9–10, 82, 118
Cloward, Richard, 226, 234n5
collective action, viii–ix, 1–14 passim, 27, 68, 166, 228–31 passim
Columbus, Ga., 34, 116, 205–15
Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), 5, 14, 38; Alexander's role in, 24, 34, 65–66; and analysis of Communist strength, 9, 34, 40, 45, 65–66, 120; as buffer against Communism's growth, 9; response of, to police brutality, 83
Committee on Unemployed Relief, Atlanta, 48, 51
committees of action, 68
Commonwealth, 119–20
Communism: appeal of, to African Americans, 9, 25, 40, 108; Great Depression's influence on, 9, 14, 44; influence of local issues and need on growth of, 57, 136. *See also* Communist Party, Atlanta section; Communist Party of

Communism (*continued*)
Alabama; Communist Party of Georgia; Communist Party of the United States of America
Communist International (Comintern), 4
Communist Party, Atlanta section: activism, decline in, 59, 120–21; cooperation of, with liberals, 33–34, 121, 136–37, 159–60; demonstrations of, 27, 30, 47–48; financial problems of, 55, 58; growth of, 9, 26, 40, 83, 117; internal conflicts in, 44, 51, 55, 58, 120–21; and labor activism, 85, 117; neighborhood organizing of, 40, 55–56, 85; stress of, on unemployed organizing, 9, 12, 26, 48, 51, 53, 85, 136; and textile strike, weakness of, 26, 44, 51, 55–56, 58, 107, 120–21
Communist Party of Alabama, 180, 220, 237n13
Communist Party of Georgia: and African Americans, 4, 9, 12, 23–33 passim, 49, 56, 120, 146; composition and membership of, 4, 28–30, 50–51, 117; grassroots support for, 12, 14, 27–28, 48, 117, 136, 146; insurrection law opposed by, 159–60; internal conflict in, 44, 51, 55, 58, 120; isolation of, 9, 120–21; and leadership of unemployed movement, 4, 8–9, 12, 15, 20, 27–53 passim, 136, 137, 159, 160; obstacles to growth of, 3, 32–33, 44, 55–56, 72; prominence of, in Workers Alliance, 12, 159, 163, 180–81, 186, 229; race relations in, 12, 22, 32–33, 49, 56, 136–37, 223; and rural organizing, 60–61, 67–68, 70, 73; and self-determination slogan, 4, 23; and textile strike, 1934, 106–8, 116–17, 120, 122; white membership of, 12, 32–33, 50–51, 56, 223
Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA): Agrarian Department of, 62, 64; appeals to African Americans, 9, 23, 45, 167–68; Central Committee of, 33, 46, 62, 64; and economic crisis of 1930s, 19, 22, 45–46; and Herndon, 9, 19, 29, 44, 50; growth of, in South, 19, 23, 24, 68; and international unemployment day (1930), 27, 28, 30, 31; and leadership of unemployed movement, 4, 7, 22, 38, 85; limited support of, for southern organizing, 57, 121; Negro Department of, 46, 62; obstacles of, in South, 14, 120–21; and Popular Front, 137–38, 141, 144, 155, 157, 163; southern organizing drive of (1930), 4, 19, 23, 25; support of, for unemployed, 7, 12, 22, 83, 158–59; views Depression as organizing opportunity, 22, 27–28, 67–68, 83, 225
Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO); founding of, 155; and organization of unemployed, 7, 158, 170–71, 174; organizing efforts of, 14, 170–71; Unemployment Committee of, 174, 181; and Workers Alliance, 181
Cotton Textile Institute, 113–14
Cox, Albert, 157–58, 207, 208, 216
CPUSA. *See* Communist Party of the United States of America
Crusader Press Service, 24, 26
CWA. *See* Civil Works Administration

Daily Worker, 108; on West, 86–87
Dalton, Ga., 8, 10, 102, 157, 162, 215, 222
Dalton, Mary, 27, 32, 35

Darnell, Grace, 177, 194
Davis, Benjamin J., Jr.: as advocate for Georgia unemployed, 158; as editor of *Negro Liberator*, 84; and Herndon defense, 84; on lynching and textile strike (1934), 107–8; and West, 55
Davis, Glover, 84
Davis, John P.: on SCU growth, 73; on unemployed movement, 222
Decatur incident, 117–18
Dimitrov, Giorgi, 137–38
Di Santo, John, 23–24
District 17, CPUSA, 137; and analysis of southern unemployment, 42, 62; and appeal to African American farmers, 65; and rural organizing, 63, 64
Dombrowski, James A., 104, 139, 141
Donovan, John: and Communist Party, 187, 190, 182, 201; erratic behavior of, 198, 200–201, 215–16; ineffective leadership of, 192, 201; reassignment of, to South, 182; as Workers Alliance organizer, 182, 183, 187, 195, 203, 205, 216
Duke, Lawrence, 194; criticism of WPA by, 184; HUAC testimony of, 180; and KKK, 179–80; and Workers Alliance factionalism, 179–81, 184, 187, 190

Eagle-Phenix Mill, 104–5, 114, 186
"economy bloc," 193, 194
Emergency Committee for Southern Political Prisoners, 32
Emory University, 119–20
Eskew, Minnie, 190
evictions: resistance to, 33, 46, 69; in strike situations, 112–13, 115–16
Exposition Mill, 102, 107, 115

Fairburn, Ga., 205–6
Farmer-Labor Party, 142, 157
Farmers Union, National, 78, 153–54, 155
Federal Council of Churches, 152, 153
Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), 74, 98, 128–34 passim; in Georgia, 80; Shepperson as administrator of, 83
federal government: growth and impact of, in Georgia, 227–28; social provision by, 227; and Workers Education Program, 98–99
Federal Works Agency, 189, 199
FERA. *See* Federal Emergency Relief Administration
Finley, Brewer, 69
Floyd County, Ga., 69–72
"flying squadrons," 107, 109
Foster, William Z., 23; and Foster-Ford campaign, 51
Frantz, Laurent, 142
Frazier-Lundeen Bill, 144, 147, 158
Friedman, Ernestine, 171–72
Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills: history of labor militancy at, 25, 85; as site of Communist organizing, 85, 137; strike, 1934, 102, 117
Fulton County Relief Commission, 46–47

Garvey, Marcus, 25, 68
Gastonia strike: as background for Georgia labor activism, 25; role of Tippett in, 95
Geer, John, 121
George, Walter, 187
Georgia: Communist Party growth in, 14; economic recovery in, 190; Great Depression's impact in, 16–18, 20, 190; impediments to mass action in, 2; wartime employment in, 189–90
Georgia Federation of Labor (GFL): conservatism of, 35, 93; and craft union movement, 25; on CWA,

Georgia Federation of Labor (*continued*)
92–93; endorses budget increase for WPA, 41; on prevailing wage, 94, 129, 131, 132, 135; and project workers' strike (1935), 8, 131, 132; solution of, for unemployment, 128; supports organizing drive (1930), 35
Georgia Relief Commission, 93
Globe, Sibley, and Enterprise Company, 122–23
Googe, George, 97, 124, 133, 155, 199, 221
Gorman, Francis, 156; and appeal to Roosevelt, 1934, 106; Communist support of, 157; on textile strike outcome, 111, 112–13
Great Depression: impact of, on Atlanta population, 18, 19; impact of, on urban workers, 17–18; in Midwest and Northeast, 16; as national phenomenon, viii, 16, 18, 181; radicalizing influence of, 27–28; in South, vii, 16, 61–62, 181
Green, William, 94; in Atlanta (1930), 35; concern of, for skilled laborers, 94; cooperation of, with Workers Alliance, 204; and security wage, 130; and split with CIO, 155; on textile strike outcome, 123; on unemployment compensation, 41, 92

Hall, Otto: failures of, as Communist Party organizer, 44, 52, 55; and Herndon case, 50, 55; role of, in unemployed movement, 50, 55
Hanna, Hilton, 95–96, 97, 98
Harman, H. E., 218, 219, 221
Harrington, F. C., 202, 203, 211
Harris, Lement, 66, 91, 145
Hartsfield, William B., 203
Herndon, Angelo, 18, 83, 84; appeals of, 53; arrest of, 48–49; background of, 44, 46; conviction of, 59; defense coalition of, 50, 52–55, 84–85, 137–38, 139; imprisonment of, and impact on Communist Party prospects, 46, 49–50, 53, 55, 138, 139; as symbol, 49, 53, 138, 251n21; ties to white working community, 46; as unemployed organizer, 46, 47, 57, 58; and U.S. Supreme Court, 53, 138, 139; value of, to CPUSA, 46, 49–50, 55, 58, 138; on weakness of Atlanta Communist Party, 44; and West, 54, 55
Hickok, Lorena: analysis of tenancy and sharecropping as labor system by, 62, 66, 74, 76–77; on CWA, 87, 88, 89; reports on Georgia to Harry Hopkins, 62, 76, 87, 88, 90; on southern poverty, 66, 74, 88; view of, on Georgia planters, 66, 75, 88
"hidden transcript," 3, 139
Highlander Folk School, 14, 139, 140, 141
Hod Carriers Union: organizes Bibb County African Americans, 221; and Popular Front, 141; in Rossville, Ga., 130, 162, 186; and unemployed organizing, 130, 162, 186
Hollihan, S. A., 105, 112, 131
Hoover, Herbert, 21, 175
Hope, John, Jr., 118–19
Hopkins, Harry L., 87, 99, 135, 162, 176, 177; criticism of Nance by (1935), 132; on increased southern WPA quotas, 184, 185; and relief benefits for strikers, 101; and textile strike (1934), 102; on threatened WPA strikes in Georgia, 132; and WPA wage policy, 129, 133, 167–68
Horton, Myles, 143
House of Representatives, U.S.: Appropriations Committee, 202;

Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), 180, 183, 198, 203; Special Investigating Committee on Communist Activity in the South (1930), 26, 40
Hudson, Dick, 147, 166
Hudson, Hosea: background of, 62; and Communist Party work in Georgia, 3, 107, 121, 146; on Donovan as organizer, 191; on preconditions for successful Communist Party organizing, 3, 58; on resistance to discrimination, 223; on result of police intimidation, 121; on unemployment insurance, 41; and Workers Alliance, 12, 186, 195, 223
Hudson, John H., 26, 30, 31, 86, 118, 120

ILD. *See* International Labor Defense
Inabinett, M. D., 208, 209, 217, 218
Ingram, Frank, 217
insurrection law: enforcement of, 29, 30–31, 58–59, 159; and free speech, 36, 139, 159; impact of, on unemployed organizing, 31, 33, 58–59; liberal opposition to, 36
International Brotherhood of Paper Makers, 92–93
International Labor Defense (ILD), 84, 121; and ACLU, 34; and Atlanta Six, 33–34, 225; and CIC, 34; and Herndon case, 50, 51, 52, 55, 138, 225; and NAACP, 34; role of, in Communist Party southern drive, 34; and Washburn-Leathers defense, 121
International Unemployment Day (1930): failure of, in Atlanta, 27, 30, 31; goals of, 27; support for, 30
International Workers Order (IWO), 117, 212
interracial cooperation, 12, 32, 57, 59, 226–27; in response to Herndon case, 49, 85, 138–39; sexual implications of, 24; in threatened project workers' strike, 135–36; in Unemployed Councils, 27, 136; in Workers Alliance, 12, 185–86, 187, 222–23; in Workers Education Program, 96–97
Iron Molders Union, 70, 87

Jackson, Gardner, 150
Jackson, Harry, 49–50
Jacobs, Joseph: and assistance to unemployed workers, 122, 174; as labor lawyer, 122, 174, 198; and Socialist Party, 140; on Workers Alliance, 175
Jim Crow, 14, 24, 62, 79, 105; in relief, 65; and unemployed, 12, 30, 134, 227, 231
Johnson, Clyde: in Atlanta, 136; background of, 69–70; and denial of Communist Party ties, 155; and Farmers Union, 70, 145, 155; as labor organizer, 70, 87; police harassment of, 85; relationship of, with West, 70–71, 85; in Rome and Floyd County, 69–70, 87; as SCU Farm organizer, 70–73, 145; and STFU, 145; transfer of, to Alabama, 72, 87; and unemployed organizing, 85, 136
Johnson, Reginald, 81, 135–36, 161
Johnson, Tom: on importance of united front, 33, 45; on need for Communist Party support for racial equality, 31, 32, 45
Johnson and Johnson Corporation, 123–24
Johnstone, Alan, 80

Karston, Karl, 35
Kester, Howard: as ACLU organizer, 119; on anticommunism, 98–99; on Communism's appeal to African

Kester, Howard (*continued*)
Americans, 45; on Communist Party growth in South, 45
Key, James L., 31, 133
Ku Klux Klan: attack on NAACP, 154; opposition to, 39; in Workers Alliance of Atlanta, 179–80

labor movement. *See individual labor organizations*
Labor Review (Augusta): on Atlanta Six, 36; on Communism, 41
labor surplus, impact of, in rural areas, 61–62, 74, 76–77, 88, 149–50, 263n53
Labor Unity, 87, 156
Lake, "Comrade" (Atlanta), 24
Lampkin, Daisy: concern of, over Communist growth in Atlanta, 56; relationship of, with Roy Wilkins, 56
landlords, rural: demand of, for cheap labor, 61; manipulation of relief system by, 74
Lasser, David, 142, 181, 197, 218; in Atlanta, 182, 196; concern of, over internal conflict in Georgia Workers Alliance, 200–202; and decline of Workers Alliance, 211; on regional wage equity, 178, 192–93; resignation of, as president of Workers Alliance, 211, 215; on WPA cutbacks, 176, 202; as WPA employee, 219
Lawson, John Howard, 84–85
League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR), 45
Leathers, Annie Mae, 51, 85, 107, 118, 121
Lewis, John L: as advocate for unemployed, 173, 174, 181; and Workers Alliance, 181
liberals, 5, 13; and Atlanta Six defense, 33–34; cooperation of, with Communists, 13, 31; and Herndon defense, 53, 138–39
lynching: Congressional failure to legislate against, 154; NAACP focus on, 154–55

Macon, Ga., 105, 113, 116, 133–34, 153
Macon Telegraph, 53, 152
Marquardt, Louis P., 34, 35
Martha Berry School: Clyde Johnson's involvement at, 70–71; student strike at, 70–71; West's activism at, 70
Martin, Walker, 71
Mason, Lucy Randolph, 155
mass mobilization: as Communist Party strategy, 22, 30, 57, 214–15, 225; and future of collective action in Georgia, 224, 229–30; as labor tactic, 22, 224–25; of rural workers, 57, 63, 65; of unemployed, 22, 30, 47–48, 57, 213, 224, 228
McMahon, Thomas, 105
Michelson, Clarina: and appeal to Socialists, 50; and Foster-Ford campaign (1932), 51; on Herndon case, 50; on rural militancy, 65; on unemployed demonstration of 1932, 48; view of, on Communist Party prospects in Georgia, 48
middle class: activism of, 4; anticommunism of, 42
—African American: attitude of, toward black working class, 42–43, 54, 147; relationship of, with Communists, 136–37, 146, 229; suspicions of, about Workers Alliance, 183; and WPA, 134–35, 146–47
Miller, Malcolm, 88, 217
Miller, R. C., 26, 40
Millis, Mary Raoul, 36, 37, 38, 83
Mitchell, Clarence, 154–55, 167, 168
Mitchell, H. L.: anticommunism of, 139, 145, 146; NYA work of, 172;

rural union organization endorsed by, 145, 146, 172–73; STFU merger with SCU opposed by, 139, 145, 146; WPA rural relief urged by, 173
modernization, in Georgia and the South, 230
Moore, James, 138, 166
Murphy, Al, 62, 69, 77

Nance, L. Steve: on Atlanta Six prosecution, 34, 35; on Communist Party strength in Georgia, 41; concern of, for families on relief, 93; as Georgia CIO leader, 93, 155–56, 172; liberalism of, 134, 172; opposition of, to security wage, 129, 130, 131, 133–34, 147; and protection of skilled laborers, 93–94; relationship of, with Communists, 34, 155; and textile strike of 1934, 102; as TWOC leader, 156–58; and unemployed organizing, 8, 35, 134
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP): concern of, over Communist growth, 9, 56; conflicts of, with Communist Party over Herndon defense, 56, 57; distance of, from working-class African Americans, 57; and lynching issue, 154, 167; and police brutality, 167; on WPA discrimination, 134, 147, 153
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Atlanta Branch, 4–5; alleges discrimination by WPA, 149, 152; attacks on, 154; and Communists, 34, 56, 167; protests against CWA discrimination, 91; protests against Fairburn violence, 205–6; protests against peonage, 63, 152, 153; Red-baiting of, 154, 167; and unemployed, 9, 91, 147
National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), 113–14
National Farmers Union (NFU), 78, 153–54, 155
National Guard, in 1934 textile strike, 105–6
National Negro Congress (NNC), 220
National Recovery Administration (NRA), 10, 101; codes, 82; and discrimination against African Americans, 82; as stimulus to labor organization, 100
National Right to Work Conference, 197
National Security Union, 215
National Student League (NSL), 70, 89
National Textile Board: impotence of, 103–4; opposition to, 104
National Textile Workers Union (NTWU), 26–27
National Unemployed League, 20, 57, 142
National Urban League. *See* Urban League, Atlanta Branch
nationwide unemployment day of 1930, 27, 30, 31
Nazi-Soviet Pact, and unemployed movement, 189, 211, 229
Negro Liberator, 31, 84
Neighborhood Union (Atlanta), 5; concern of, for African American respectability, 42–43; and West Side Unemployment Committee, 42–43; on WPA, 135
New Deal, 177, 193; African American inclusion in programs of, 134; and collectivism, 6; Communist reaction to, 117; and "federalization" in Georgia, 7, 79–80, 82, 83, 211, 227; public support for, in Georgia, 76, 193;

New Deal (*continued*)
racial status quo challenged by, 79, 134; and relief programs, 82, 99, 110; southern conservative attack on, 80; and textile strike of 1934, 99, 110; and unemployment, vii, 6; and welfare state ascendancy, 134, 213. *See also individual agencies*
—impact of: on labor movement, 8, 10, 117; on radicalism, 116–17, 198; on relief delivery in Georgia, 3, 79, 99, 110, 188; on South, 67, 79, 188; on unemployed movement, 3, 11, 79, 187, 211, 226
New Republic, 40, 71
New South, 231
Newton, Herbert (alias Gilmer Brady), 34, 35
Niles, David K., 152, 166, 169, 197
NRA. *See* National Recovery Administration

Ozman, Ted, 194

Patterson, William, 51
peonage, debt: in Georgia, 66, 149, 151–52, 154, 168–69; and NAACP, 63, 169; protests against, 63–64, 149, 151–52, 169, 177, 190; West's analysis of, 151–52
Perrien, Jesse, 87
Petry, O. E., 104
Pike, Harvey J., 174, 185, 194
Pike, Homer, 171, 186
Pine Mountain Valley project, 180
Piven, Frances Fox, 226, 234n5
police: brutality of, 86, 154, 167; and harassment of unemployed organizers, 31–32, 54–55, 85–87; and insurrection law, 54–55, 159–60; and lynching, 154; and proto-fascist organizations, 167; and Red scare of 1934, 85, 86; surveillance of Communists by, 48–49, 55, 85–86, 159
politics: Georgia, 187–88; and New Deal, 187
Popular Front: and AFL, 138; Communist Party strategy of, 137–38, 141, 144, 155, 178; criticism of, 146; decline of, 146, 155, 165–66, 181, 189, 215; formation of, 127, 137–38, 141; implementation of, 138, 163, 178, 229; middle-class organizations' endorsement of, 147; Socialist reaction to, 139, 141, 142, 144; split in, 155; as strategy and tactic, 138, 178, 230; unemployed movement as expression of, 127, 138, 141, 144, 145, 163–64, 223
Populism, 24, 25, 68
Powers, M. H., 30
President's Organization on Unemployment Relief (POUR), 21–22, 43
prevailing wage, 8, 9, 129, 149–50, 153
"public transcripts," 3, 139
Public Works Administration (PWA), 7, 89, 93–94, 133, 150

race: assumptions about, 58, 61; relations, 97–98; and tenancy and debt peonage, 149, 151–53; tensions, 38, 39
racial equality: Communist Party attitude toward, 45; and unions, 97
racism, 209, 211
radicalism: in Alabama, 2; as factor in unemployed movement, viii, 5, 6, 27, 31, 136, 175, 225; in Georgia, 5, 12–13, 14–15, 27–28, 30, 108, 175; Georgia state government response to, 9, 13, 58–59; obstacles to growth of, 12–13, 24, 59, 72
Rainey, Glenn, 36, 39, 220

Ramspeck, Robert, 130, 160, 177, 185
Raper, Arthur, 83–84; on African American job displacement, 38; on African American migration, 73–74; on Black Shirts, 39; on impact of federalization, 82; on Red Cross relief, 65, 75; on sharecropping system, 66, 67, 73; on WPA policies, 153
Rasmussen, Paul, 144
Rauch, Fred, 207, 209
Red-baiting, 85, 86, 96–97, 118–19; and labor movement, 35, 117; of NAACP, 154–55; and unemployed movement, 35, 181, 229
Red Cross: African American reliance on, 75; collaboration of, with planters, 21, 65, 67; criticism of, 65, 67; impact of, on rural labor supply, 21; policies of, 21, 65
Red scare of 1934, 59, 85–87, 117–19, 120
Reeltown, Ala., 63
Reese, F. F., 24, 26
regional labor board, of NRA, 102, 103, 104
relief: crisis, rural, 65, 74; federal involvement in, 79, 127; manipulation of, 74; and nongovernmental agencies, 20; political reaction to, 76; shortcomings of, 20–21, 75; for strikers, 101, 110; and wages, 75, 87–88; and WPA, 99
replacement workers, 73, 101, 102, 114, 122
Rome, Ga., 34; Communist Party weakness in, 27; Communist presence in, 60; as Populist stronghold, 31, 238n4; strikes in, 87, 102
Roosevelt, Eleanor, 193; appeals to, 208, 210; assistance of, to Workers Alliance, 197
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 117, 133, 159, 193, 195, 218; cooperation of, with unemployed movement, 197; and government centralization, 7; impact of, on union organizing, 106, 107, 116; and purge of conservatives (1938), 187–88; relationship of, with Workers Alliance, 181, 197; and relief, 87, 99; and "Roosevelt Recession" (1937–38), 170; support for, in Georgia, 76, 87, 177, 193, 199
Ross, Nat: analysis of Communist Party opportunity in Georgia by, 50–51, 52, 73, 222; complaints of, to national Communist Party, 55, 137; as District 17 organizer, 49, 55, 137; on Georgia's role in National Hunger March, 1932, 52; on rural poverty, 65
Rossville, Ga., 10, 162, 163, 222
Russell, Richard, 130, 133

Savannah: African American complaints from, 91–92, 208–9; as Communist stronghold, 26; CWA discrimination in, 91–92; labor movement in, 24, 199; relief administration in, 81, 208–9; WPA discrimination in, 133–34, 208
Schwellenbach-Allen Resolution, 177
Scott, Hardy, 194; Georgia Communist Party role of, 174, 176, 178, 192, 200, 201, 220; on Georgia unemployed movement growth, 179; and Georgia unemployed movement unification (1937), 176–77, 178, 179; and Nazi-Soviet Pact, 220; on rural workers, 184–85; and SNYC, 220; as spokesperson for unemployed, 174, 177, 184–85; temporary withdrawal of, from Georgia

Scott, Hardy (*continued*)
Workers Alliance, 182, 187, 192; and Workers Alliance factionalism, 180, 187, 192, 201, 220
Scottsboro Case, 99; and CPUSA, 45
SCU. *See* Share Croppers Union
security wage: AFL view of, 129; Nance opposition to, 129, 130, 131; protests against, 129–30, 132
segregation, 13, 56; Communist denunciation of, 12; in labor movement, 10, 221. *See also* Jim Crow
self-determination: as Communist Party policy goal, 4, 23; as Communist Party slogan, 4, 62, 64
Senior, Clarence, 143; on Socialists organizing African Americans in Georgia, 37
sewing room projects, WPA, 148–49, 161, 183–84, 210–11
sharecroppers: and CPUSA, 61; effect of economic changes on, 2, 62, 66–67, 73, 74; and peonage, 63, 66; radicalization of, 63, 73; and SCU, 61, 62, 68–69, 73, 154; violence against, 61, 62
Share Croppers Union (SCU): in Alabama, 61, 62, 68, 69, 145; effort of, to merge with STFU, 78, 145; and Farmers Union, 78, 145, 154, 155; growth of, in West Georgia, 63, 68–69, 73, 77, 139; limited gains of, in Georgia, 69, 72–73, 78, 139; membership of, 61, 77, 222; obstacles of, to collaboration with STFU, 77–78, 139, 145; white support for, 62, 69, 77
Sharecropper's Voice, 139, 145
sharecropping, decline of, 66, 67, 73, 154
Shepperson, Gay, 176, 195, 214; collaboration of, with Hopkins, 131, 132, 133; on CWA labor relations, 92; defends policies, 92, 133, 150, 152–53, 169–70, 187–88, 207; on labor surplus, solution for, 88; on Nance, 93, 132; relationship of, with planters and employers, 75–76; as relief administrator, 75–76, 80, 206; and relief-policy management during textile strike, 110, 113; response of, to unemployed demonstrations, 131, 132, 133; on security wage, 133, 136
Silver Creek, dissidents in, 63
slavery, 63, 66
Sloan, George A., 110, 113–14
Smith, Alfred Edgar: as African American ombudsman in WPA, 161, 169, 205–6, 209; and Fairburn violence (1939), 205–6; protests of, against peonage, 169
Smith, Hilda, 180
Smith, Joseph, 208, 209
Socialist Party, USA: and American Security Union, 215; and southern organizing drive (1935), 140, 155
Socialist Party of Georgia (Atlanta): attitude of, toward Communists, 37, 54, 141; conservatism of, 5; internal divisions in, 140; and race issue, 37; and unemployed activism, 4, 8–9, 20, 215; and Workman's Circle, 140, 141
Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW), 14; and Donovan, 192; support of, for WPA and unemployed, 193
Southern Cooperative Foundry, 70, 87
Southern Cotton Textile Manufacturers' Association, 102
Southern Negro Youth Conference (SNYC), 220
Southern Summer School for Women Workers, 172
Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU): Communist Party courtship

of, 77–78, 139, 145; composition of, 78, 145, 172, 222; H. L. Mitchell role in, 78, 139, 145–46, 172–73; protests WPA policies, 153; resists SCU alliance, 78, 139, 145, 146; Socialist influence in, 78, 146; and unemployed, 150, 173; weakness of, in Georgia, 145, 173
Southern Worker, 68, 118; African American sharecroppers appeal to, 63; on Atlanta Six, 38; circulation of, among workers, 137; endorses unemployment insurance, 41, 158–59; on Glover Davis case, 84; on insurrection law, 159
Stachel, Jack, 157
Stenholm, Alice E., 43
Stevenson, Estelle: attack of, on WPA, 148, 195; criticism of Workers Alliance by, 196; support of, for sewing room workers, 148, 196; WPA attitude toward, 148–49, 196
STFU. *See* Southern Tenant Farmers Union
Story, Henry, 35
strikes: at Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, 25, 102, 117; in Gastonia, 25, 95; government relief policies amid, 101, 110; of project workers, 193, 199–200; in textiles (1934), 10–11, 59, 100–126, 156; of unemployed (1935), 132–33
"sunshine syndrome," 22
Supreme Court, U.S., and Herndon case, 53, 138, 139

Talmadge, Eugene, 119; attitude of, toward New Deal, 79–80; and betrayal of textile strikers (1934), 105, 110–11, 114; opinion of, on federal relief programs, 80; relationship of, with Shepperson, 80, 169–70
Tarver, Malcomb, 161, 176
Tennessee, 139–44 passim, 161, 162, 163
Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), 162
textile industry: African Americans in, 105; and Communist Party, 10, 106
Textile Labor Inquiry Board, 111
Textile Labor Relations Board, 112, 114–15, 122
textile strike (1934), 6, 8; impact of, on radicalism, 59, 116–17; issues in, 101, 102; long-term significance of, 11, 25, 59, 99, 100, 123, 127, 228; management solidarity in, 110–11, 112, 113–15, 122; NRA failure in, 103–4; origins, 104–5; outcome of, 11, 100, 103, 110–12, 115–16, 122, 125; and unemployment, 11, 99, 100, 110, 111, 115; violence in, 103, 105–6, 110
Textile Workers Organizing Committee (TWOC): concern of, for unemployed, 158, 170–71, 172, 173; in Georgia, 156, 158, 170; Nance role in, 156–57; at national level, 156, 170–71; organizing campaign of, in South, 156–58, 170
Thomas, Norman, 140
Tippett, Tom, 95, 96–97, 98, 172. *See also* Workers Education Program
Tompkins, Sophronia, 210
Trade Union Educational League (TUEL), 22
Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), 26; and Unemployed Councils, 22; weakness of, in Georgia, 26, 41
Tribble, Edwin, 40
Trotskyists, 57, 142
TWOC. *See* Textile Workers Organizing Committee

"unemployables," viii, 4, 11, 160, 189, 190, 212, 214, 227

Unemployed Councils: activities of, 2, 20, 22, 27, 85, 175; appeal of, 9, 11; Communist leadership of, 5, 22, 27, 136; criticism of relief agencies by, 42; decline of, 57, 58; demonstrations by, 27, 47–48; establishment of, 20, 42; impact of, 14, 85; membership of, 9, 10; program of, 22, 42, 85; tactics of, against evictions, 22, 42
unemployed movement, viii, 235n6; communist involvement in, 4, 12, 19–23 passim, 38, 86, 175; co-opted by New Deal, 211; decline of, 137, 190, 198, 211–12, 222; elite concern over, 6, 9, 47–48; fragmentation of, 57–58, 162, 179–81; impact of, on status of unemployed, viii, 5, 47, 85, 186; influence of, on union movement, vii, ix, 128, 147–48, 230; integrated composition of, 6, 12, 27, 47, 50, 135–36, 222–23, 226–27; and Popular Front, 57–58; as social movement, 3, 20, 234n5; strategies and tactics of, 3, 33, 85; summarized, 5, 58–59, 224–31; unification of, 57, 141, 142, 176, 178; urban focus of, 225–26; World War II impact on, 218, 220, 223
Unemployed and WPA Workers Union, 174–75, 176–77, 178, 181, 186, 194
unemployment: in Atlanta, 18, 53; decline of, 212–13, 219, 220, 230; demonstrations against, 27, 30, 47–48; as factor in Communist Party recruitment, 44, 136; in Georgia, 16–17, 20, 190, 213, 214, 218, 219; impact of, on African Americans, 17; transitional, 219; in United States, 16, 17, 213
unemployment compensation, 147, 158, 214; AFL resistance to, 41, 92; Communist Party endorsement of, 30, 41; endorsement of, by Georgia Federation of Labor, 41
Unemployment Councils, 137, 142
unemployment insurance. *See* Frazier-Lundeen Bill; unemployment compensation
unions, 100–126, 230; and African Americans, 221, 222; and Georgia workers, 8, 10, 34; segregation in, 10; and strike wave (1934), 6, 8, 100; weakness of, in Georgia, 34
United Auto Workers of America (UAW): and Detroit Local 174, 173; in Georgia, 158, 174, 179, 183; and objectives of unemployed organization, 173–74; and program for unemployed members, 158, 173, 183
United Farmers League, 62, 64
United Textile Workers Union (UTW), 104, 106, 111, 112, 113, 122, 123, 128, 157
Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA): influence of, in Southwest Georgia, 24–25; issues stressed by, 25, 68
Urban League, Atlanta Branch: anticommunism of, 26; and Communists, 117–18, 146; concern of, over African American job displacement, 38, 43, 81–82, 135; Emergency Relief Committee of, 43; encouragement of unionism by, 38, 166–67; on unemployment, 53, 81–82; on WPA treatment of African American workers, 134, 135, 145–46, 166

Van de Vrede, Jane, 90
Van Dusseldorp, Wilma, 81

Vinson, Carl, 202
violence. *See* Black Shirts; Ku Klux Klan; police
voluntarism, 21, 227

Wagner Act (1935), 10
Walden, A. T., 167
Warren County, Ga., alleged peonage in, 151, 153
Washburn, Edith and Walter, 37
Washburn, Nannie Leah: on Black Shirts, 39; and Communism, 23, 33, 107; on Communist Party growth, 51; and Depression in Atlanta, 18; on Herndon, 46, 48–49, 53–54, 85, 108; imprisonment of, 118, 121; on interracial unity, 19, 23, 46, 47, 53; as labor organizer, 85; on New Deal, 198; on police harassment, 31–33; on textile strike, 112; as unemployed activist, 19, 47; on Workers Alliance, 159, 178
Washington, Forrester B., 152, 154, 167
Watson, Tom, 24
Weeden, Secretary (Atlanta YWCA), 96, 98
Wellman, Ted: as Communist Party district leader, 141, 142; criticism of, 143; urges united front, 141, 142; and Workers Alliance, 141, 142; WPA organizing role of, 141–42
West, Donald L.: and Berry School strike, 70; comments of, on Red Scare of 1934, 86; departure of, from Georgia, as fugitive, 54–55, 86–87; as Herndon-defense coordinator, 54; interest of, in Communism, reasons for, 54; on peonage, 151–52; police harassment of, 85, 86; relationship of, with Clyde Johnson, 70, 86; and unemployed movement, 85, 86
West Point, Ga., 63, 68–69
Wheat Street Baptist Church, 82, 118
White, Walter, 152, 167, 168
Wilkins, John, Jr., 208, 209, 211, 217
Wilkins, Roy, 56
Williams, Aubrey: as ally of Workers Alliance, 177, 192, 204; as WPA administrator, 169, 177
Wilson, Walter, 36
Winant, John G., 111
women: on sewing projects, 148, 149; in unemployed movement, 160; as victims, 148
Woodruff, Robert W.: on federal intervention, 43–44; and POUR, 43, 61
Woodrum, Clifton, 193, 194
Woodward, C. Vann: and Herndon defense, 54; opposes Atlanta Six prosecutions, 36
Work, 181, 183
workers, agency of, 125–26, 228
Workers Alliance, Georgia: in Atlanta, 160, 174, 178–83 passim, 186, 215, 220–21; in Augusta, 179, 204–5, 215; in Columbus, 179–82, 206–8, 215, 216; Communist role in, 9, 11, 20, 160, 180–81, 182, 201, 223, 229; factional struggle in, 162, 179–81, 182, 186, 198, 201, 202; functions as grievance committee, 175, 179, 183–84; and Ku Klux Klan, 179; leadership of, 180, 182; membership of, 9, 181–82, 222; on new labor relations mechanism, 192, 215–16; in North Georgia WPA District, 141, 161–63, 176, 182, 186; popular support for, 14–15; program of, 175, 178, 192–93, 195; Red-baiting of, 11, 198, 229; as representative of

Workers Alliance, Georgia (*continued*)
African American jobless, 12, 160, 183, 189, 190, 203–11, 216–17, 222; Savannah protests, 208–11, 215, 217–18; on sectional wage differential, 178; state conference of, 179; statewide growth of, 1937–38, 176, 178, 179, 181; and "unemployables," 11, 160, 189, 190, 198, 199, 212–13, 222; and WPA strike (1939), 200
Workers Alliance of America, 165–88; and AFL, 144, 200, 204; and African Americans, 2, 10, 11, 159, 161, 179, 183, 208–12; in Alabama, 2, 180, 182–83, 195; All-South Conference of (1938), 143–44; and All Southern Conference of WPA Workers (1939), 193–95; Cleveland Convention of, 179, 181; Communist influence in, 20, 144, 160, 165, 175, 211; and concept of unionizing unemployed, 2–3, 178–79, 228, 229; decline of, 11, 12, 189, 198, 201–2, 211, 223; functions as labor union, 10, 11, 175, 183, 186, 211; merges with other unemployed organizations (1936), 141, 142, 144; protests Georgia discrimination, 149–50, 185, 208–18; resistance to, on projects, 192; and "Roosevelt Recession," 163–64; and sectional wage hike (1938), 178; and southern organizing drives, 144, 182–83, 188; as voice of unemployed, 11, 141, 160, 217, 228–29; and women's issues, 161, 183; and WPA budget cuts, 160–61, 194, 198, 202, 203; on WPA strike (1939), 200
Workers Education Program: AFL reaction to, 97, 172, 252n38; impact of, 97–98, 171–72; and interracial organizing, 96–97; objectives of, 94–95, 146, 171, 172, 180; radical influence on, 95, 98, 146, 172; Red-baiting of, 96; and Workers Alliance, 172, 180; and WPA, 98, 171–72, 180
"worker statism," 7, 234n8
Workman's Alliance, 217
Workman's Circle, 140, 141
work relief. *See* relief; *and specific agencies*
Works Progress Administration (WPA): African American ombudsman in, 161, 169, 205, 206, 209; alleged discrimination of, against skilled union workers, 146–47; budget cutbacks in, and impact in Georgia, 160–61, 176, 177, 195, 199; certification for work in, 147, 150, 161, 184; collective bargaining policies of, 211, 215; denials by, of discrimination in Georgia, 149–50, 152–53, 169–70, 210–11, 217–18; and Georgia employment totals, 170, 176, 190, 191; impact of, 7, 127, 136; as issue in 1938 elections, 187–88; layoffs in, 161, 175–76, 185–86, 195, 223; and manipulation of rural labor supply, 149–50, 151–52, 185, 263n53; and national defense, 193, 218; North Georgia District of, 146, 161–62; as opportunity for African American employment, 134, 147, 221, 222; and racial discrimination allegations, 133, 135, 149, 150, 161, 209–11, 217; and sectional wage differential, 178; shrinkage of, 176, 177, 190, 195; and southern job quotas increase, 184; and strike (1939), 199–200; and strike threat (1935), 131–33; and unionization of project workers, 8,

162; wage issues in, 129–33, 149–50; women's issues in, 148–49, 176, 183; and Workers Alliance, 149–50, 160, 161, 183
World War II: impact of, on unemployment, 213–14, 219; as stimulus to economic recovery, 189–90, 213, 218, 230; U.S. entry into, 189, 214
Xenophobia, 6, 75

Yagol, Nathan, 119, 120, 121
Young Communist League (YCL), 31, 137
YWCA, 95

Zimmermann, Etta Mae, 114, 115

This page intentionally left blank

Politics and Culture in the Twentieth-Century South

A Common Thread: Labor, Politics, and Capital Mobility in the Textile Industry
by Beth English

"Everybody Was Black Down There": Race and Industrial Change in the Alabama Coalfields
by Robert H. Woodrum

Race, Reason, and Massive Resistance: The Diary of David J. Mays, 1954–1959
edited by James R. Sweeney

The Unemployed People's Movement: Leftists, Liberals, and Labor in Georgia, 1929–1941
by James J. Lorence